

# Wild Creatures Afield

BY

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Author of "RATAPLAN, A ROGUE ELEPHANT"  
Etc.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

GUSTAVE VERBEEK

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PHILADELPHIA

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TO

MR. WILLIAM T. HORNADAY

DIRECTOR OF THE NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL PARK  
IN APPRECIATION OF HIS EFFORTS TO POPULARIZE USEFUL  
KNOWLEDGE OF WILD ANIMALS



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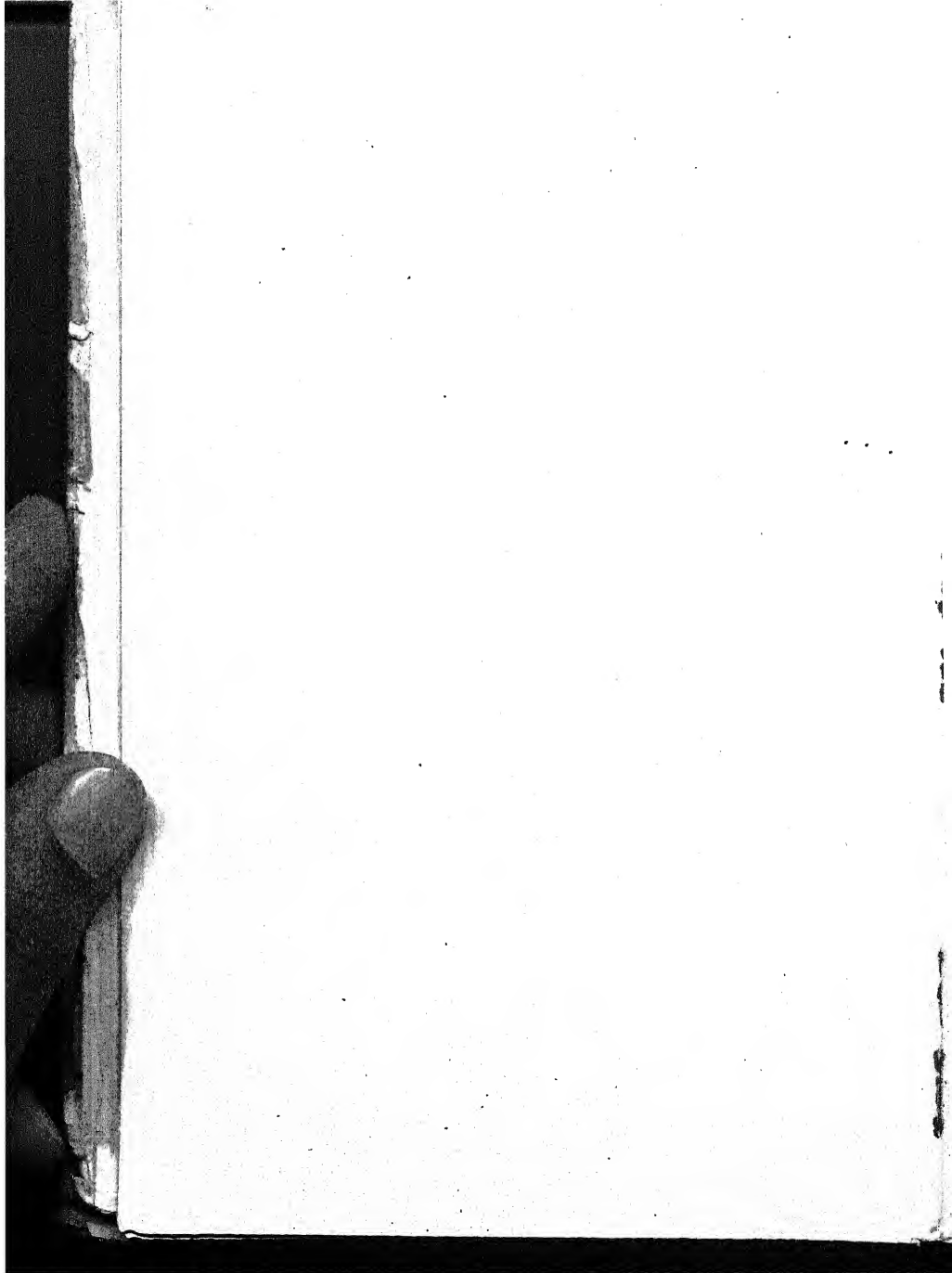
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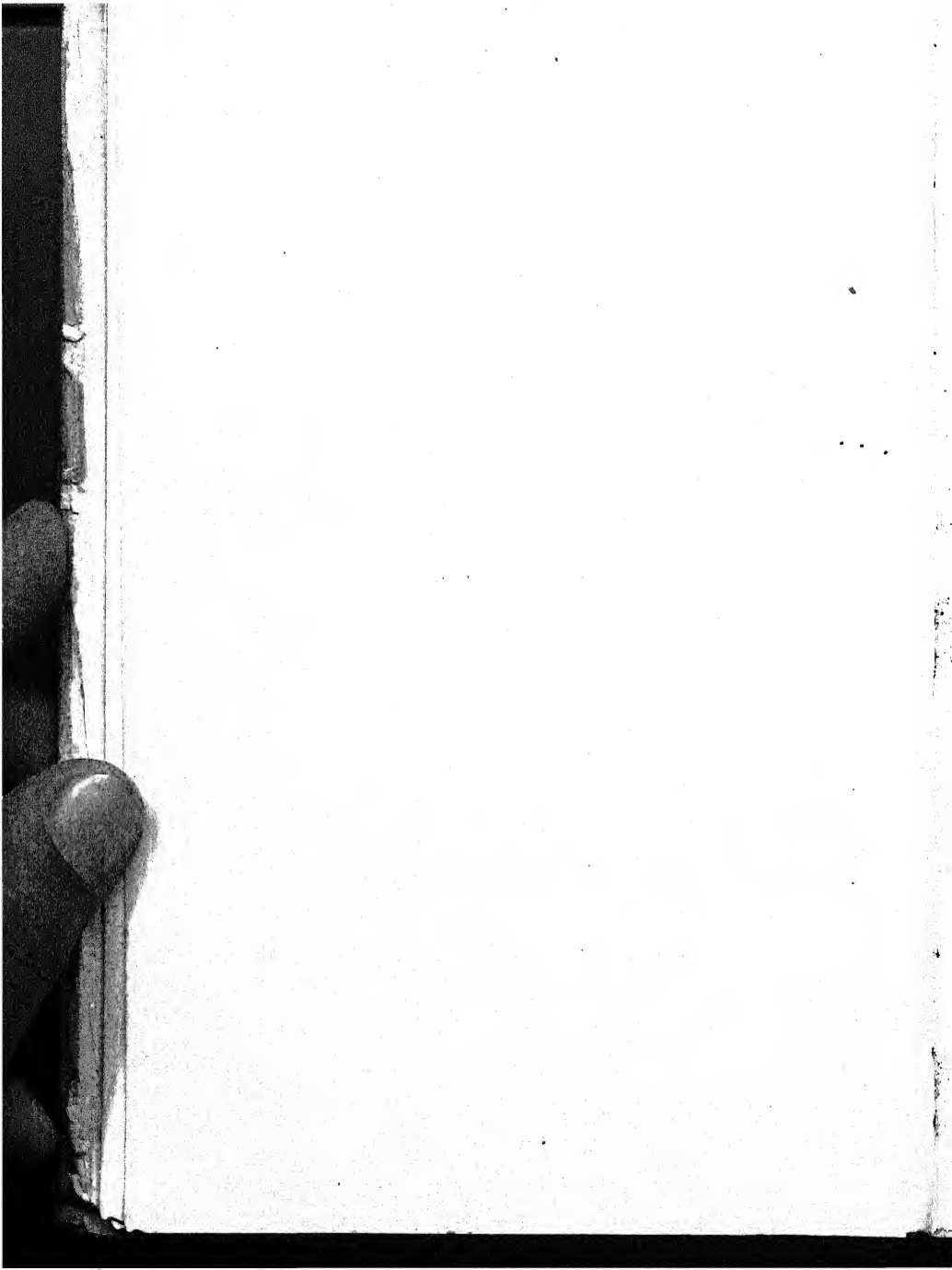
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# THE MOOSE





## THE MOOSE

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HY Elker, the Moose, felt so miserably sick and wretched he did not know himself. All he did know was that he had suddenly lost his pair of beautiful antlers, of which he had been so proudly conscious all last summer and fall.

When he discovered his loss he had felt so ashamed of himself that he had at once made his way into the swamps and marshes where he was not likely to be seen, and contented himself with feeding on the leaves and roots of the yellow water-lily. He could have obtained better and more varied food by leaving the swamp and looking round among the trees and

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

bushes, but in his present state he hated to be seen, and so kept carefully in hiding.

He seemed to get worse as time went on, for after awhile, in the very places on each side of his head where he had formerly had his beautiful antlers, there appeared two small, velvety knobs, so tender, sensitive, and painful that he dared not let even a branch touch them. These velvety little knobs grew steadily, and every bit of nourishment that Elker obtained from the food he ate went to feed and supply those little knobs with fresh blood, while his formerly strong and vigorous body got thin and weak, and he was so tired and weary he could scarcely stand.

An ungainly looking animal at any time, Elker now looked more strange and peculiar than ever, for his antlers had been his chief beauty. He stood about six feet high at the shoulders and probably weighed about eight hundred pounds; his short, heavy body was about nine feet in length, while his long legs, short neck, large flapping ears, and long narrow head terminating

## THE MOOSE

in a broad over-hanging muzzle, covered with very fine hair like silk, made him look as though he had just been dug up out of the past ages.

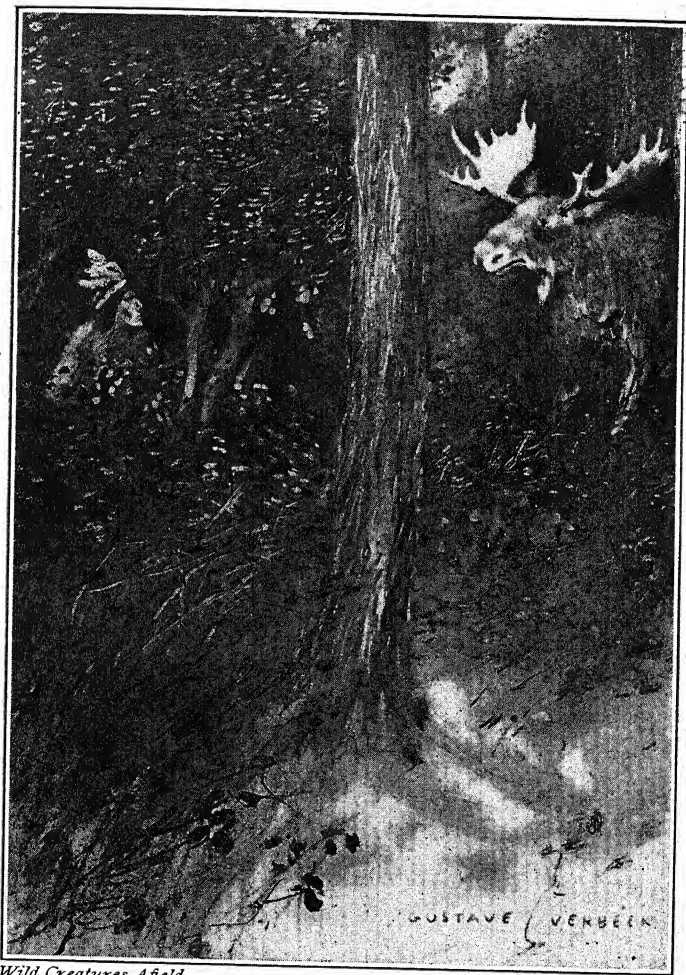
To make his appearance more peculiar, the top of his short neck had a crest of stiff, erect hairs, while on his throat was a long tuft of hair called a "bell." But, clumsy and awkward as he appeared, Elker's body was well adapted for his life and manner of living. His long legs enabled him to take big strides over the swamps and marshes when looking for yellow splatter-docks, the roots of which he was very fond, and his height made it easy for him to reach upward and peel the bark off the young trees, or bite off the tender shoots and branches. His big, fleshy muzzle was splendid, too, for grasping things, and if he happened to find something nice which was too high for him to reach with it, he would back his big body against the tree, and very often be able to break the whole tree down, and then he could reach the top branches easily.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

But just at this time, Elker did not care much even for the roots of his favorite yellow splat-docks. He had no appetite to speak of, and his one desire was to keep himself invisible, and in time he grew so nervous about this matter that he could scarcely think about anything else.

But after awhile he found, to his great surprise, that he had another pair of antlers growing, but although they had now branched out on each side of his head into the same wide, broad form, something like a palm, or outspread hand, they were still covered with the velvety surface caused by very fine hairs, and still tender and sensitive.

Then came a day when he began to feel better, and beyond a certain irritation in his antlers which he eased by rubbing them against the trunks of the trees, he found he was as strong as ever. He did not know that by rubbing his antlers in this manner he was scraping off all the velvety surface and exposing to view a splendid pair of new antlers, the form and size of which



*Wild Creatures Afield*

"THE INDIAN HAD NEVER SEEN A FINER MOOSE"



## THE MOOSE

proved that he was now a full-grown Moose, and nine years old.

But as soon as he knew he possessed big antlers once more, he began to long for a fight, and grew restless and uneasy, and tired of the swamps. He was not ashamed to be seen now, either, but proud and conscious of his beauty and strength once more, although many would have considered him anything but handsome as he made his way between the trees, his big, wide, fleshy nose held well up, his antlers laid back on his shoulders to avoid the branches, and his long legs straddling over the ground in a clumsy, shambling gait.

But as he went out of the swamp, Elker felt very proud of himself, and sent forth a challenge to fight in a weird, wild bellow, or roar, which made the forest echo and re-echo again and again. He listened attentively, but to his surprise and disappointment there was no answer, and he sent forth his challenge again with the same result as before.

He grew wild with rage to think there was no

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

answer, and roared time after time, for he was determined to fight before the day was over. And then suddenly in one of the pauses he heard something which made all the wild blood leap up in him. This was a curious, rasping noise caused by the antlers of another Moose being rubbed against the bark of a tree, in the very way in which Elker had been rubbing his, and was not only an answer to his challenge, but a direct challenge to himself.

Crashing through the forest, Elker tore on until, guided by the sound being repeated, he came close to it, and then stopped—stopped so suddenly that he was almost thrown back upon his haunches. For he scented danger. He could smell Man, and not only smell him, but actually see him, for there, hiding cautiously in the tangled brushwood, was the form of an Indian, his long, lithe body almost concealed, his black, beady eyes peering out between the bushes, and in his hand the shoulder-bone of a Moose.

For long hours had the Indian been tracking



## THE MOOSE

the Moose, and the sound which Elker had answered so eagerly was caused by the shoulder-bone of a dead Moose being drawn against the bark of a tree to imitate the challenge of the animal.

The Indian had never seen a finer Moose, and it was with a pang of regret and a gruff "Hump!" that he saw the animal recover himself, turn round, and disappear before he had time even to aim at him.

But Elker was not going to stay to argue matters. He wanted a fight, but with a Moose, not Man, and having moss-clad and yielding ground in his favor, he made off, in spite of his huge bulk, with marvelous rapidity and in absolute silence. The Indian's stony, expressionless face conveyed no disappointment, no surprise. He knew another trick worth two of that, and, after waiting awhile, he took out a small, dirty-looking pipe made out of birch bark, and, putting it to his mouth, made a peculiar whistling sound.

Almost before the sound had died away, there

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

was another crash through the forest, and Elker appeared again in the very spot where he had been threatened with danger only such a short time before. But when he found that he had again been mistaken, his rage knew no bounds.

The Indian, thinking he could not be seen, had moved forward a little in order to get a sure and good aim this time, but Elker was mad with rage, and, turning suddenly, sprang towards the Indian, and before he had time to recover from his surprise, leaped upon him and deliberately trampled him under foot. He went on trampling long after the Indian had ceased to breathe and when nothing was left but a shapeless mass, and—as if in mockery—the shoulder-bone and the birch-bark pipe with which he had so vainly tried to entrap the Moose.

But when he had been trampling for some time, Elker stopped and listened attentively, for coming clearly and distinctly through the forest was the challenge of another Moose. There could be no doubt this time, for rage and anger

## THE MOOSE

were contained in that thrilling call, and no one could imitate that.

For the third time, Elker answered the challenge with another one, and tearing madly off, he suddenly met another Moose face to face. And then he had his wish. For there followed one of the fiercest fights between two full-grown Moose that had ever taken place before in all Northern America.

With bent heads, panting and breathing heavily, the two animals went at it so fiercely, so wildly, and in such deadly earnest that it was not very long before their big, powerful antlers got interlocked, and then they moved to and fro, to and fro, butting, pulling, shaking their heavy heads savagely from side to side, and steadily getting weaker and weaker.

And it was a great wonder that they had not died in this way, for, had they remained like that, they must have starved to death, but, in some wonderful manner, after one of the terrific wrenches, their antlers got loose again, and, panting, weary, and utterly exhausted, Elker

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

thought he would leave off, especially as he had had very much the worst of it in many ways.

And whether this fight satisfied him in some way or another I do not know, but for some time after this he kept quiet, and when he had a fight again, it was because another Moose wanted the same wife that he wanted, and he was not going to allow that.

When he had finished that fight, he had suffered rather severely, but as he had finally got the best of it and the wife he wanted, he determined to give up fighting for the time being, and became fairly quiet and gentle.

Elker's wife was not handsome by any means. She had no antlers, for one thing, and was more awkward and ungainly-looking than Elker. But she was very quiet and good-tempered and Elker was very proud of her. They had a delightful time while the warm weather lasted, and kept chiefly to the swamps and lakesides, where they found young branches of the striped maple, willow, birch, poplar, and other trees.

## THE MOOSE

When it was very hot, they would wade out into the lakes, and feed on lily-roots and succulent water-plants, with their big heads half under water.

As the winter came on, they went to the hilly woods, and fed on the resinous foliage of the evergreens, and any green wood, moss, or lichen they could find. But when the snow came they had hard times for awhile, and could only tramp irregular paths with some other Moose, making what is called a "Moose yard." There were some birch, poplar, and mountain ash trees round about and in this yard, and a little balsam, fir, and juniper, and this was about all they could get, so that by the end of the winter they were all rather thin.

In January Elker had his miserable time again, for he lost his antlers every year and had to go through much the same sort of thing, but he did not hide himself entirely this time. He always kept near his wife, picked all the best twigs and branches for her, and did all he could to guard her against enemies. But when he was

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

fairly himself again in May, and his antlers were growing once more, he found that his wife was not the quiet, gentle creature she had been before. For she now had two pretty little fawns, marked with faint velvety spots, and, at the slightest sign of danger, she would raise her head, throw back her ears, put her large, sensitive nose in the air, and, wobbling it about as though in search of the enemy, she would sniff and blow through her nostrils like a vicious horse.

No one would have recognized in the furious, raging animal the same quiet, inoffensive creature of some few months before. She insisted, too, on living in the most secluded and out-of-the-way places, for she dreaded the attacks of wolves or bears, and, although Elker did not like it at first, he soon saw that she was right. For one night he caught a young bear waddling quietly towards the Moose yard, and although he soon sent him off, Elker was not particularly fond of tackling bears, and much preferred to have nothing to do with them.

## THE MOOSE

So, while the little fawns were very young, Elker contented himself by going to some nice shady place near by, settling himself comfortably with his tail to windward, and proceeding to chew his cud in placid contentment. But he was always on the watch. He would chew his cud calmly, but all the while his large ears would move perpetually—one backward, the other forward—for he never could forget how, once upon a time, he had been so terribly taken in by that Indian.\*

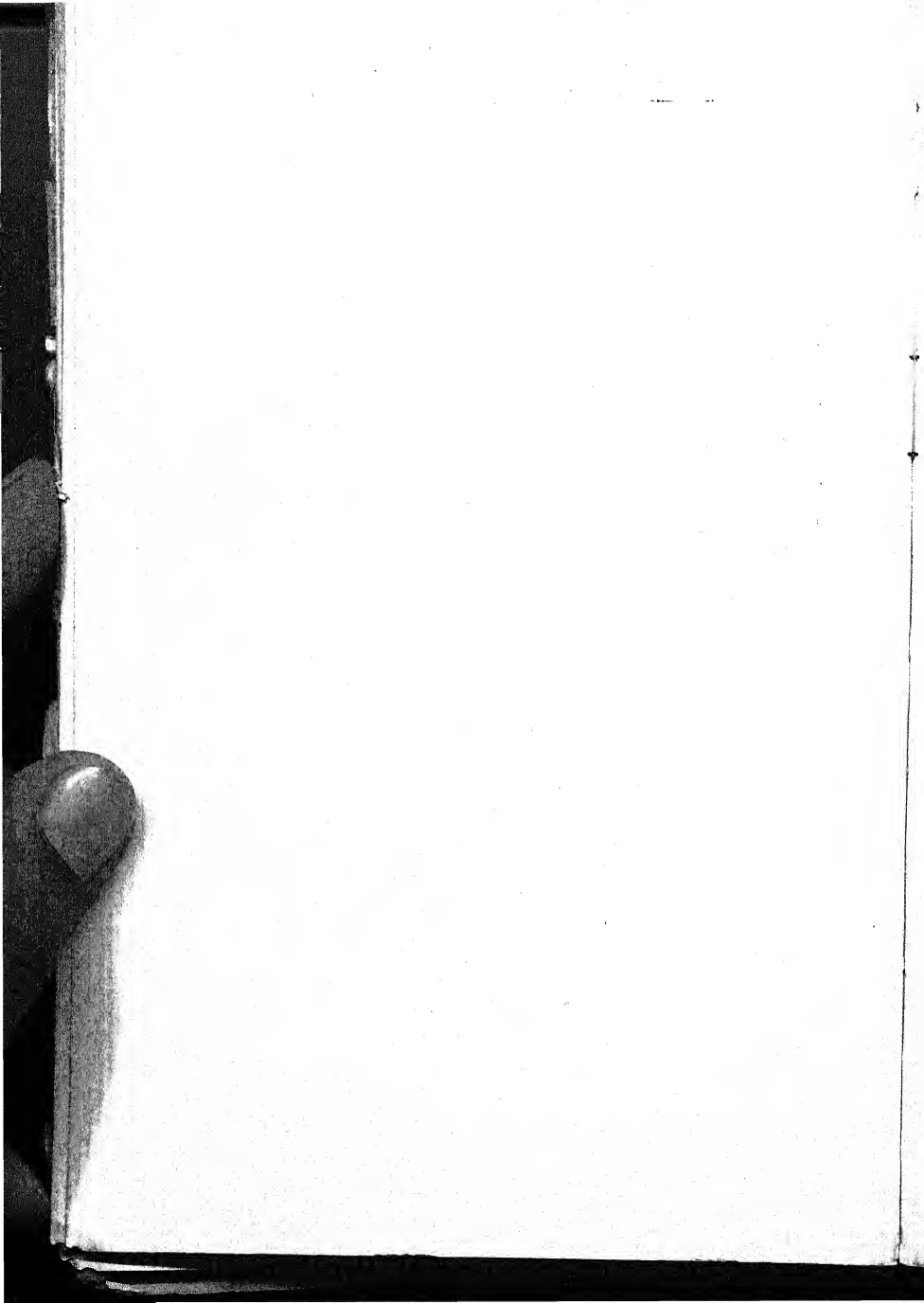
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\*Authorities differ as to whether the male Moose remains with the doe and fawns. Mr. C. C. Ward states that he has often found several whole families in a Moose yard and living amicably.—AUTHOR.





# THE OPOSSUM



## THE OPOSSUM

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**P**OSSER was one of the naughtiest young Opossums in the United States, and lived in constant danger through his own recklessness and disobedience.

His home was in one of the thick, beautiful woods of Virginia, and his mother had chosen a nice, wide, hollow tree for their special living-place, where she reared and brought up her various families. She had had rather a hard time of it that particular year, for this was her third family and the largest of any.\* She had eight young ones this time, and she had usually had only six or seven before.

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\*Opossums have two or three litters each year, each litter numbering from six to fourteen.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

But when she thought of one of her neighbors who always had ten to fourteen at a time, she grew contented and happy, for eight was a small number compared to fourteen. The one thing that troubled her the most with her last young ones was Posser, and he gave her as much trouble and anxiety as all the others put together.

From the very minute he was born, and his mother—following her usual custom—proceeded to put him carefully into her pouch with the others, where he would be cosy and comfortable, and able to get nice, warm food whenever he wanted it, he had begun by promptly tumbling out again, a thing which had never happened in the family before. Then, tiny and helpless as he was, he had a ravenous appetite, and never gave the others a minute's peace by his constant struggles to get the best place in the pouch.

As he grew older and was able to move about, he was more troublesome than ever, and so daring and venturesome that at times his

## THE OPOSSUM

mother grew nervous and irritable, and scolded him.

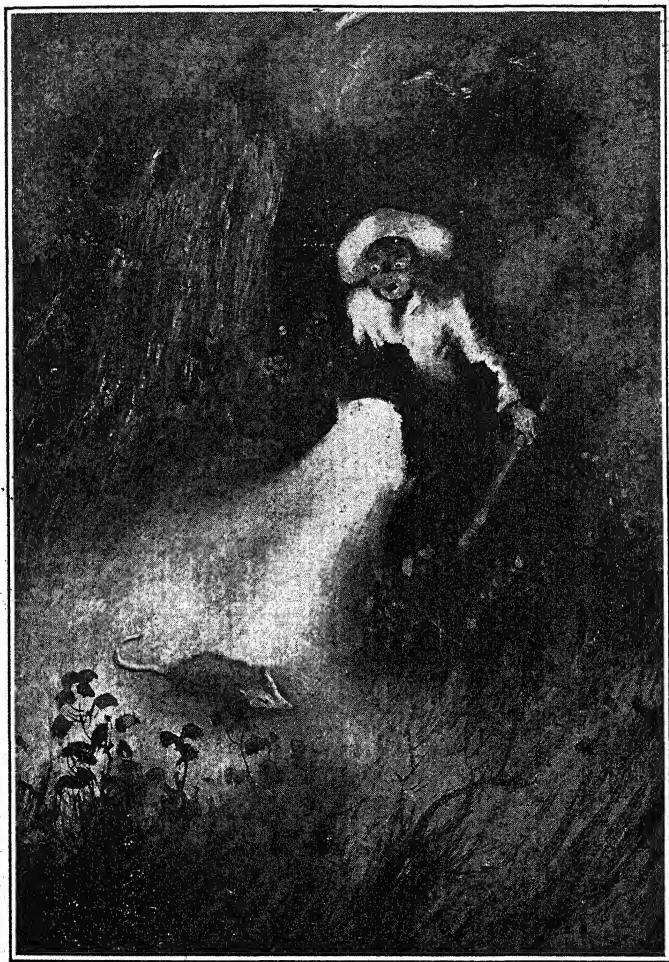
But Posser was sublimely happy over it all; as he grew stronger, he did everything that it is possible for an Opossum to do. He burrowed into the earth and made nice little tunnels in all directions; climbed trees quicker than any of his brothers or sisters; and amused himself by hanging head downwards with his long, smooth tail coiled deftly round a branch, while he watched his brothers and sisters climb over their mother, giving her an occasional bite with their sharp little needle-like teeth, and then creep underneath her soft, woolly fur to take a nap.

But it was at night that Posser was the most daring. He never went far from his mother by day, but as the evening shadows crept round the woods Posser would begin to feel lively, and would get out of the pouch, go his own way, and venture into the most dangerous places. He never went so very far, it is true, and generally returned safely, but his poor mother fretted and fidgeted herself until he came back again, and

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

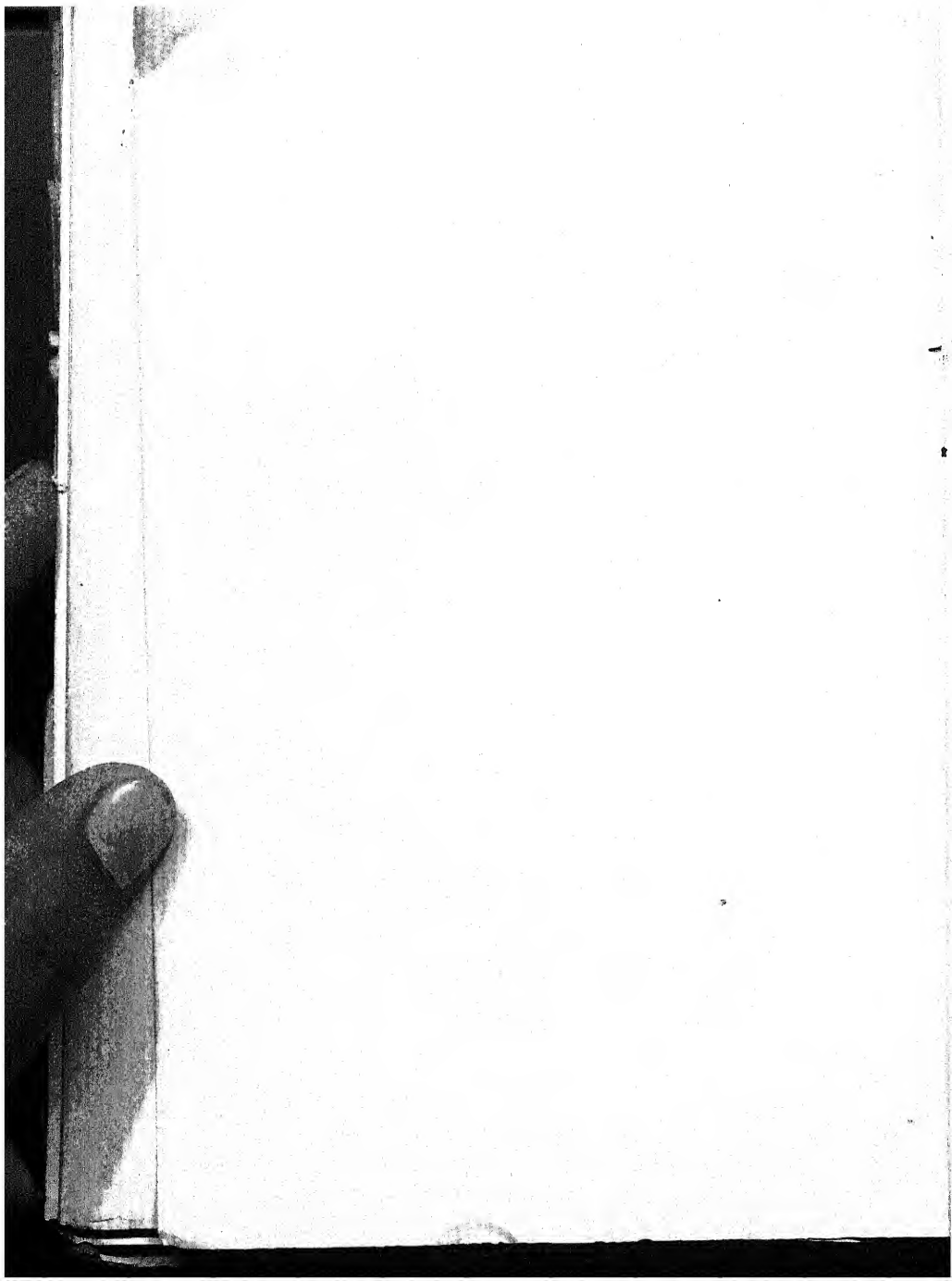
then she usually punished him pretty severely. One night Posser had gone out as usual, hoping to get a nice, fat mouse, or a few tasty insects, or perhaps an egg, for he was beginning to despise the food his mother gave him at home—when he saw a very bright light coming towards him. Now, daring as Posser was, he did not care for lights, and, moreover, he happened to be walking on the ground at the time, and, although he could climb trees easily and quickly, he was never able to walk very well, and so could only move in a slow, clumsy manner.

So that, as the light came nearer and nearer, he grew doubly frightened, for he was some way from the nearest tree and a long way from home. After awhile, the light was so bright and dazzling that it seemed to swallow him up, and he was so dizzy and confused that he just stopped where he was. And then something kicked him, throwing him to some distance, where he lay more dizzy than ever. After this there was the sound of footsteps, the light came closer again,



*Wild Creatures Afield*

"HE HAD FOUND A YOUNG OPOSSUM ALL BY HIMSELF"





## THE OPOSSUM

and a little colored boy who held it uttered a cry of joy.

He had found a young Opossum all by himself, and how pleased his folks would be! Stooping down, he picked Posser up, looked at him carefully with his face grinning with delight, and then laid him down again by the lantern. Now, if Posser had only known it, he could easily have run away then, but he was much too terrified to move, and this the little boy knew quite well. The bright light so close to him frightened him nearly to death, and the kick—which would have killed some rodents—made him feel stupid.

The little colored boy seemed to be busy doing something with a stick for a few moments. Then he came over and picked Posser up again, but this time Posser was not quite so gentle. He squeaked, and grunted, and did his very best to bite any part of the little boy that he could get hold of. But his enemy had seen Opossums before and knew their ways, so, after a desperate struggle, Posser suddenly felt an agonizing

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

pain in his tail, and then found himself being carried head downwards.

Now, to hang head downwards with his tail coiled comfortably round a branch, and to hang in the same way with that tail held tightly in a split stick which has been snapped on to it are quite different matters, and so poor Posser found. In vain he wriggled and struggled, and grunted and squeaked; the more he struggled the more his tail hurt—and, oh, *how it hurt!*—and to add to his misery, the little boy gave him some very hard knocks, for Posser scratched and bit him once or twice, which was not pleasant, by any means.

But an Opossum, even a young one, can stand a great amount of knocking about, and so, in spite of the kick, and in spite of his many knocks and pinched tail, Posser arrived at the little boy's home, which was quite close, and, after having been shown to his admiring family, he was put into a little box, and beyond having a sore tail, was none the worse for his adventure, except that he was very, very miserable.

## THE OPOSSUM

He could only look at his enemies with his bright little eyes, and give miserable little squeaks to show how unhappy he was. But his enemies had no idea of ill-treating him. What they intended to do was to keep him for a few weeks, fatten him up by giving him plenty of food, and then kill him and eat him. So in a few minutes the little colored boy brought him some fruit and corn, two eggs, a small sweet potato, and a little bit of fish.

And Posser ate the whole lot,\* and when his enemies had finished looking at him, and gone to bed, he gnawed and gnawed until, in the early morning, he succeeded in finding himself out in freedom once more, and in a very short time he was in his own home again. And very glad his mother was to see him.

But it had been a very good lesson to him. Never again was he so daring as to go so far from home; never again did he even venture out without first looking for signs of danger, and

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\*Opossums have enormous appetites.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

never again did he worry his mother, for he seemed to realize that she was a wise old Opossum, and knew far more than he did.

But this was only while he lived with her. When he was about two months old and about the size of a rat, he went one day to the pouch, and there found to his great disgust that it was full of other little Opossums, tiny, naked little things who looked like little mice. His other brothers and sisters seemed to take it quite as a matter of course, and seemed quite content to stay on their mother's back with their tails coiled round hers, but Posser did not care about this sort of thing at all. He liked to be first in everything, and as he had grown more restless and discontented than ever lately, he made up his mind to leave his mother and do the best he could for himself.

He found it a little hard at first, but he soon got used to it, and I am sorry to say had very soon forgotten all about his mother and family altogether. He was always happy and sleepy by day, but at night he had all sorts of adven-

## THE OPOSSUM

tures, and, although at times he came very near being killed, he generally got out of it in some way, and was just as daring and venturesome as ever.

He found plenty of food in the woods; wild fruits, nuts, and berries, insects and little reptiles, small rats and mice, roots and corn. He always enjoyed getting hold of a good cotton rat, for he hated cotton rats in one way, but he was very fond of eating them. But one day, quite early in the morning, Posser found something that puzzled him.

A little way from the home he had made for himself were two nice fresh little crabs lying on the ground, and a small fish. Posser was suspicious at first and kept away, but the crabs and fish stayed there, and at last he ventured out and stealthily ate them, looking sharply round all the time for enemies. But nothing happened, and the next day, only when the sun was brighter, Posser looked out and saw more crabs and more fish lying about.

This went on for several days, until at last

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

Posser grew so daring that he would go out and eat the dainty food slowly and with relish, and did not even take the trouble to look round. And all this time a man was hiding close by, and every time that Posser came out he took his photograph, and very nice pictures he got of him.

But one day, just when Posser was enjoying himself over a nice crab, the man gave a shout, and, as Posser looked round with anger and terrible fright on his face, he took his photograph, and a very cross-looking Opossum he was. But that was the last picture the man ever took of him, for Posser grew more wary as he grew older, and was not going to run any risks with a man, even for the sake of dainty crabs and delicate fish. In vain the man tried all sorts of other food. Posser had had a fright and a lesson, and, although his frights and lessons never lasted very long, he kept out of the way long enough this time to tire out the man's patience, and in time he went away, and Posser had the place to himself once more.

## THE OPOSSUM

Another time, just when he was in a nice, comfortable sleep, he heard the barking of dogs and the sound of men's voices. Had he stayed where he was he would have been safe, but he was startled, and ran out, which was about the very worst thing he could do. Trembling all over, and with his heart beating and throbbing as though it would choke him, Posser stumbled blindly along, and just as a big dog came leaping towards him with his mouth wide open and his red tongue hanging out, Posser got to the foot of a tree, and, all his sleepiness and clumsiness disappearing, he sprang and climbed up the tree-trunk quicker even than he had ever climbed before.

Lights appeared now and were coming closer, and Posser could see all the dreadful men and dogs looking up and trying to find him, the men talking and shouting, and the dogs yelping and barking until they made him quite giddy. But Posser was cunning enough to keep perfectly still; he was in a nice little angle where two limbs of the tree separated from each other, and

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

laying himself perfectly close to the trunk, he never moved anything but his bright little pig-like eyes, and these he never once took off his enemies below.

Then came an awful experience. One of the men climbed the tree, and actually shook the very branch he was clinging to. But here Posser's daring saved him; instead of dropping to the ground, he clung to the branch with all his strength—his four paws, each with five sharp claws, clutching the branch on either side—his snout-like nose laid flat, and his strong, flexible tail coiled tightly round a branch to help him keep his balance. He thought he would be off every minute, but he stuck on, determined not to give in, and at last the hunters, not being able to see him, and thinking he had gone, called the dogs off, and Posser was safe once more.

But he ran greater risks even than this at one time. He was enjoying himself one day, teasing a cotton rat, when he suddenly found that a man was close to him and looking at him. Instantly



## THE OPOSSUM

Posser pretended to be dead.\* Sinking down into the grass, he drew back his gums from his white, glittering teeth, kept perfectly motionless, and remained immovable until the man, thinking it was really a dead Opossum, went away. And indeed it was no wonder, for Posser's long, lean, white jaws, skinny tail, black withered ears, and draggled, faded, wind-blown fur, gave him the exact appearance of a dead animal. And so Posser "played 'possum" to some purpose, and thereby saved his life.

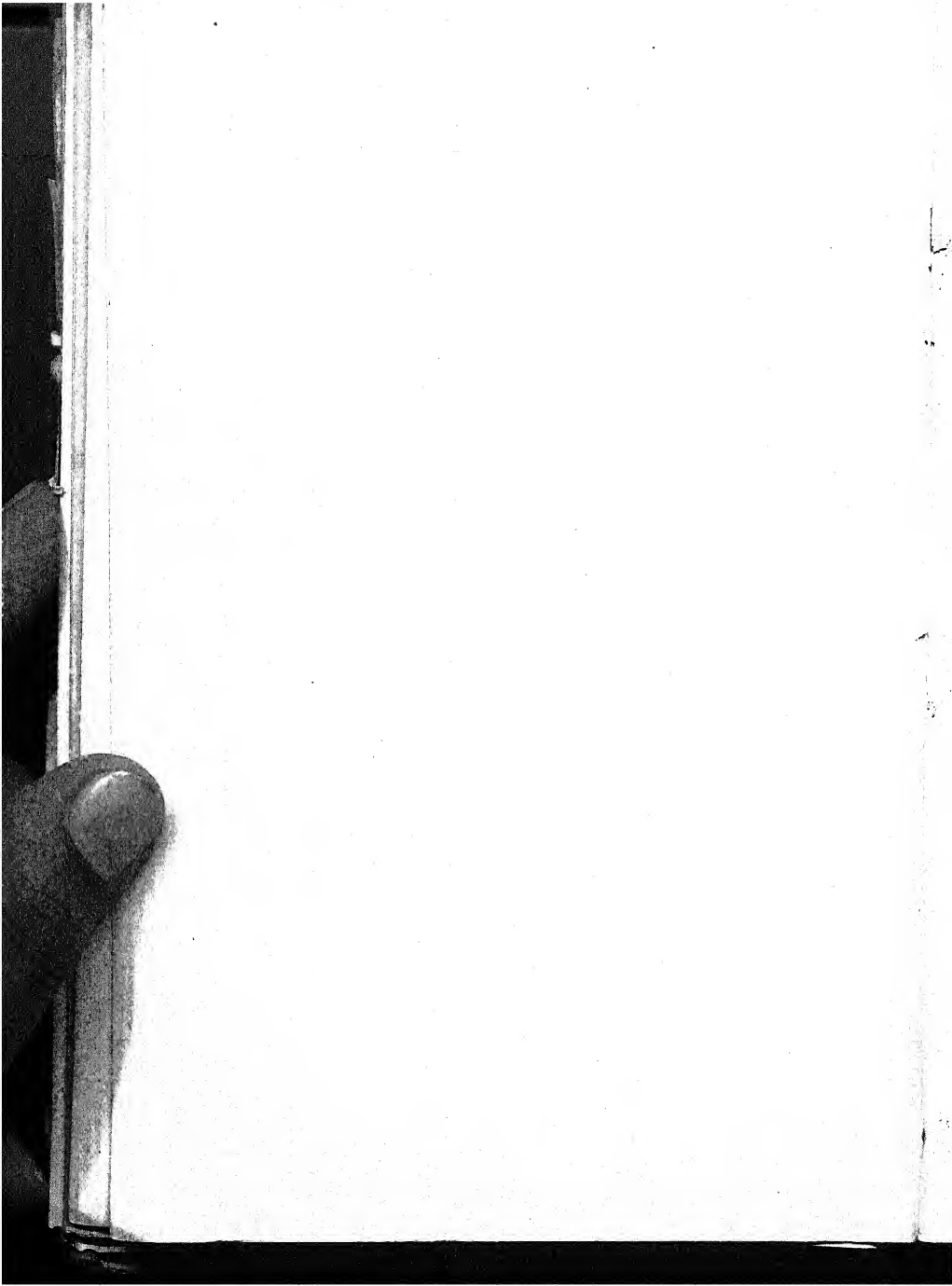
And these are only a few of the many adventures that Posser had. But he still lives on in the Virginia woods, and, although he has had so many and narrow escapes, he is still as reckless and daring as ever. But he is sublimely happy with it all. He sleeps all day, but at night he goes out and enjoys himself—catches his own food; climbs trees; burrows tunnels; and has a delicious swing whenever he wants it by simply hanging by his tail.

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\*Feigning death is a well-known trick of the Opossum.  
—AUTHOR.




# THE LLAMA



## THE LLAMA

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HE snow was falling so thick and fast that everything began to look alike, and the big mountains sparkled like sugar. There was a curious deadly stillness which even the snow seemed afraid to disturb, so softly and gently did it fall.

Suddenly, from a crevice on one of the mountains, there moved forward what looked for a moment like a huge mass of snow. But this milk-white object was not snow, but a young, pure white Llama, the finest and handsomest of all the Llamas in the Andes. He came forward swiftly and gracefully, his pretty delicate legs and feet sinking into the snow with a short, crisp sound, and his handsome head and neck turning in all directions, while his soft brilliant eyes seemed to be looking for something.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

This was Merino, and the truth of the matter was that he had had a dispute with his mother, and it had all been about a little baby brother who had appeared a few months before. Merino woke up one fine morning to find a curious little white creature covered with short curly wool—not a bit like his own or his mother's long silky hair—lying by his mother's side making funny little noises and squirming feebly. His mother, to Merino's great disgust, for he was fearfully jealous, was kissing and caressing it tenderly, and making the same crooning noises in answer just as Merino remembered her doing to him when he had been much younger.

This had been the beginning of the trouble, for from that time the Mother Llama devoted all her time and nearly all her attention to her new baby, although she still allowed Merino to come to her for his breakfast and supper\* For

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\*It is quite a common occurrence to see the young of two successive seasons being fed and cared for by a mother Llama at the same time. As a rule they live amicably, but in some cases the elder of the young ones is extremely jealous and lively scenes ensue.—AUTHOR.

## THE LLAMA

a time, although Merino was hurt and offended, things went fairly smoothly, for the baby Llama was so small, quiet, and inoffensive that he made very little difference to Merino and there was plenty of food for both.

As time went on, Merino grew madly jealous of his little brother, and did all he could to torment him and make his baby life a misery. Whenever his mother was not looking, Merino would not only bite and butt the poor little animal, but would stamp and beat him with his two-toed feet with their sharp nails, and was even so rude and naughty as to spit at him.\* He had no horns nor antlers, and so used his head, teeth, and feet to the greatest advantage.

The mother Llama was very vexed and worried about it, but when the baby was some weeks old, and she noticed that he was weak and miserable and afraid even to take a meal because of Merino, she turned on her first-born, and let him know she would have nothing more to do with

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\*All Llamas have this peculiar habit of spitting.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

him, and that he was now quite old enough to take care of himself.

And so Merino had left his family, and just as a snow-storm came on wandered across the mountain by himself. He knew well enough what to eat, but so far he had not been able to find anything on account of the snow. He was not so very sorry about being by himself, but, oh! he did so long for just one little bit of Ycho grass, for he was getting so very, very hungry.

Since leaving his mother and brother, he had had a shock, too, which had upset and frightened him. He had suddenly stumbled across something in the snow, and, having the intense curiosity which all Llamas have, had promptly proceeded to investigate it. It turned out to be the dead body of a guanaco, a cousin of his, and, on investigating further, he found a lot of other bones, for he had stumbled across one of the dying-grounds of the guanacos.\*

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\*We are told by Darwin that at Santa Cruz he found the heads of about eighteen guanacos, with a large number of



## THE LLAMA

This, added to his hunger and loneliness, made him feel very miserable, and so he had come out of the crevice to look round, and he little dreamed as he stood there that one of his bitterest enemies—Man—was watching him. Generally, his keen sense of smell would have warned him of this danger, but the snow was helping his enemy just then, and so he stood, one of the finest young white Llamas to be found in Peru, his beautiful soft, silky hair making his enemy all the more determined to get him.

So, while Merino was hesitating as to where he should go to find something to eat, a thick coil of rope cut through the air, slipped over his graceful head and neck, and then tightened so cruelly that he sank down on the snow faint and breathless. A thick mist came before his eyes, he felt sick and giddy, and he remembered no

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bones. His theory was that the animals had crawled there as their dying-ground. Mr. W. H. Hudson, on the other hand, thinks this is simply due to an inherited instinct to seek refuge, or to go away quietly to die, like all other wild animals.—  
AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

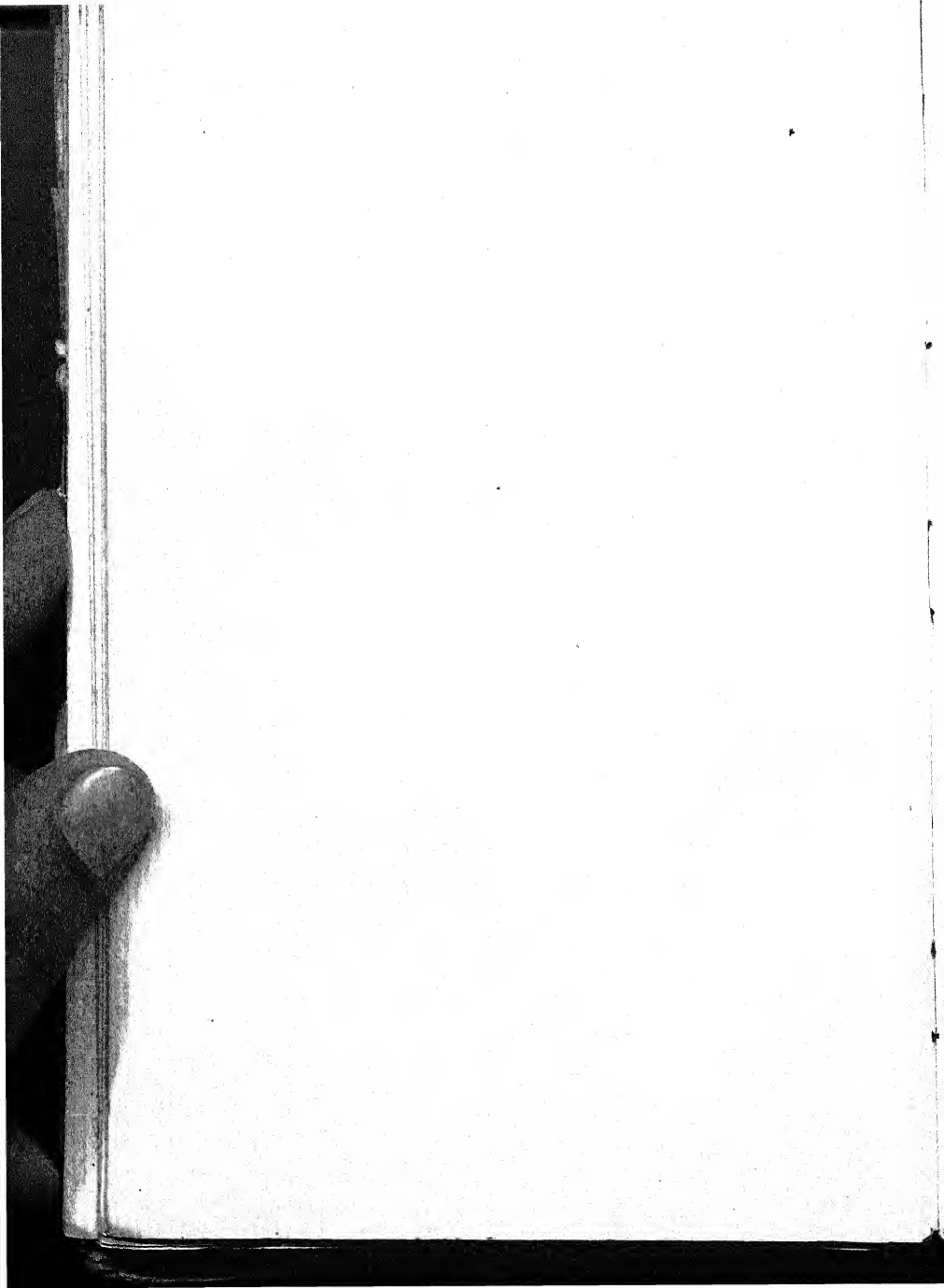
more until he found himself in a curious box, from which he tried in vain to get out.

One side of the box had large slits in it, and every now and then a man would come and look at him, making him pant and quiver with fright until he could scarcely breathe. But the man did not hurt him; indeed, he offered him all kinds of food, and even a tiny bit of his beloved Ycho grass; but Merino was far too sick at heart to eat, and could only think of his lost home and family, and his beloved mountains and clear, fresh air, and paced restlessly up and down his cage, making queer little moaning noises, and looking beseechingly at his captors with his beautiful, pathetic eyes.

But, after a time, when he realized that no one meant to hurt him, he grew quieter and more contented and began to eat once more, and when he was taken—box and all—and put into a comfortable place with another Llama for company, he soon settled down and became one of the happiest Llamas you could find anywhere.

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## THE LEOPARD



## THE LEOPARD

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IT had been one of the hottest days of the year, even for Africa, and everything seemed to be asleep in the luxuriant jungle. Not a leaf moved, not a sound could be heard but an occasional twitter of a bird, or the far-off cry of some Kaffirs in the nearest villages.

Sleep seemed to be about the only thing suitable for such a day, and even the rich leaves and grasses drooped a little in a languid manner, as though overcome. But towards evening, when the sun went down, the hum and buzzing of the insects began again, the wild animals awoke, stretched themselves lazily, and began to think about food.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

Prowler, a handsome full-grown Leopard, had been sound asleep since the evening before, when he had made a heavy meal off a sheep he had killed in the village, and still felt a little stupid from the effects. But he roused himself, yawned and shook his tawny yellow coat covered with black, velvety spots, stretched his strong, muscular limbs, drew his terrible claws in and out of his soft-looking paws just to see that they were in good condition for use, and then, with a sly, stealthy look round, crept softly through the undergrowth towards the village.

Scarcely any other wild beast would have ventured to the same place two nights in succession, but a Leopard is very daring and will face anything when he has some object in view. He was as crafty, too, as the rest of his kind, and the Kaffirs, who were always on the lookout for him, were constantly being outwitted.

As soon as Prowler had cleared the wood and reached the open, he ran lightly forward, and then stopped suddenly. For, coming out of the

## THE LEOPARD

village to meet him, were a number of Kaffirs who made it their special business to capture and kill Leopards.

One very tall, strong man led the way. He had a cloak of Leopard skin—called a Kaross—round his body, a fringe of Leopards' tails round his waist, and a necklace made from the teeth and claws of Leopards. The number of tails signified how many Leopards he had killed, and the hunter who has the largest number of tails always takes the lead, so it was not much wonder that this Kaffir looked very proud and important as he came forward, followed by other Kaffirs, each wearing something belonging to a Leopard.

Prowler knew perfectly well who they were and what they wanted, and, daring as he was, decided to go back. He took care, however, to show himself first, and to let the hunters see him go into the wood again. Then he crept stealthily up a tree, laid himself close to a branch and waited.

But the Kaffirs knew all these little tricks, and

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

kept a keen lookout among the branches. They had all passed him, and Prowler was just beginning to think he was safe, when suddenly the leader shouted out:

“Lackreebang! Lackreebang!” (Tree-tiger). In an instant Prowler sprang down into the midst of them, killing two men, wounding another one, and was off before they had time to realize what had happened. He went straight through the wood, and the remaining hunters followed cautiously, keeping a sharp lookout. Every now and then Prowler would make a curious hoarse noise, something between a grunt and a cough, just to let the hunters know in what direction he was going.

This seemed rather a silly thing to do, but Prowler knew what he was about. When he had led the Kaffirs a long way through the wood, he crouched down in some thick undergrowth and kept perfectly still until the hunters had passed him. As they passed he could easily have reached out one of his paws and struck them, but they had let some fire and smoke out of



## THE LEOPARD

things they carried when he had jumped among them, and he was afraid.

As soon as they had passed, and their cautious footsteps had died away in the distance, Prowler made his way silently and softly straight back again, but not to the village. He was daring and reckless at any time, but he was not so daring and reckless as all that. He knew that he would be likely to meet them on his way back again, and he preferred to wait until another day.

He had skillfully led them away from a little dead calf which he had killed the night before, and, being unable to eat it then, had hidden up in a fork of a tree. He would have left it there a few days longer, for he knew no lions or jackals could get at it, but as he had been prevented from going to the village he decided to make a meal of it now. He knew the hunters would not be likely to come back that way, because he had given them the impression that they were following him, which was just what he had intended to do.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

So after creeping swiftly but silently through the tall grass and thick foliage, Prowler at last reached the tree where he had hidden the calf, and with a light spring was up the trunk of the tree and enjoying a nice meal off one of the Kaffir's young animals, while the Kaffirs themselves were thinking they were still following the Leopard. Being determined not to give up the chase this time, they plodded wearily on and on, and only retraced their steps when they were too tired and footsore to go any further.

And, from his shelter in the tree, Prowler saw them in the distance, and could easily have followed them up and killed a few more of them, only he was too languid after his meal for one thing, and too lazy for another. So he let them go, watching them with his fierce and cruel yellow eyes blazing with rage, for he had not forgotten the fright they had given him, and he hated them more than ever.

But he intended to serve them out for it another time, and in a couple of nights he was at the village again, and sliding so quietly and

## THE LEOPARD

quickly into one of the cattle-pens that, although Kaffirs were posted in all directions with instructions to keep a careful watch, not one of them had the least idea that the very Leopard they were watching for had actually passed them and was already in the village.

Even outside the very pen in which Prowler had entered men were stationed, but Prowler had sprung lightly on the roof, torn away the thatch with which the pen was covered and gone coolly inside. He selected a fine young heifer, killed it with one deep grasp of his powerful jaws, and then set to work to eat it.

He seemed to be in no hurry, although he knew he was surrounded on all sides by enemies, but began in his usual methodical way and took plenty of time over it. He did not begin at the hind quarters and eat upwards as a Tiger always does, but tore out the inside and ate the heart, liver, and lungs first.

He was just in the middle of his meal when, to his surprise and rage, there was a scrambling noise, a light jump, and the next moment an-

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

other Leopard landed close to him, and prepared to share his feast. But Prowler was not going to allow that. He dropped what he had in his mouth, and the next moment, after a few hoarse, throaty growls, and vicious snarls, two Leopards were having a desperate fight in a cattle-shed.

Such a thing was almost unheard of, and the growling of the animals, the bellowing of the cattle, and the bleating of the sheep speedily brought out all the villagers, who were too terrified to do much else but shout, shriek, and wail.

The Kaffirs who had been sent to keep guard rushed to the shed from all directions, and very soon the whole village was in an uproar, men shouting, women and children screaming and crying with terror, and all the animals wild with fear.

So enraged were the Leopards that they paid no attention whatever to the noise, but with glowing eyes, fierce snarls, and tremendous strength, fought desperately. The leader of the hunters climbed up on the roof, took a good aim, and fired. When the smoke cleared away, one

## THE LEOPARD

big, tawny, spotted body could be seen panting on the floor of the shed, and another spotted animal stood up, looked round with a dazed air for a few minutes, and then sprang out and away before any one had time to touch him.

And the hunter got another Leopard's tail to add to his others, and hoped it was the Leopard who had been giving them so much trouble lately. But it was not. For Prowler had got away, and it was the strange Leopard who had been killed. And this escape only made Prowler more daring and reckless than ever. He determined to go to the village again the next night, but meanwhile he lay down and had a good sleep.

He was just dreaming that he was in the cattle-shed again and killing more animals, and that the poor things were making a terrible noise, when he suddenly woke up to find a number of monkeys overhead watching him, and chattering to such a degree that the noise was deafening. They were all looking down at him with their bright, quick eyes full of terror, their

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

anxious, worried little faces looking more anxious and worried than usual, and their lithe bodies trembling all over.

All monkeys look upon a Leopard as one of their most deadly enemies, and yet if they find him asleep, will always stop to look at him and chatter.\* Prowler lay perfectly still for a few moments, and then, selecting a nice plump young monkey, he suddenly sprang up the smooth-barked, straight trunk of the tree with such wonderful speed that he caught it without the least trouble, while the others tore off, chattering, screaming, and scolding at the top of their voices.

In vain the poor little monkey whimpered and cried. A Leopard has no pity, especially for a monkey, which he looks upon as a great delicacy, and in a very short time he was having another dainty meal. But the monkey was a very small one and not very satisfying, so after another

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\*In some curious way, Leopards seem to have the same deadly fascination for monkeys as snakes. They appear to be unable to get away.—AUTHOR.

## THE LEOPARD

little sleep Prowler woke up in the evening feeling hungry again.

He thought he would have some chickens or a dog this time—he was very fond of dogs, especially puppies—so once more betook himself to the village. He went very cautiously, however, for he was cunning enough to know that it was dangerous to go again so soon. There was a curious-looking big wooden box just outside the village, something like a mouse-trap, and Prowler thought he might just as well see what it was.

One end of it was open, and, as he peeped in he was surprised to see another Leopard inside. In an instant Prowler concluded that it must be the other Leopard he had been fighting with the night before, and his fur went up at the very thought of it, and he waved his soft, furry tail to and fro in anger. The other Leopard at once did the same, and Prowler's anger rose at the sight in a moment.

Wild with rage, he sprang into the box—there was a loud, sharp snap—and Prowler was a prisoner. The Leopard he had seen was only

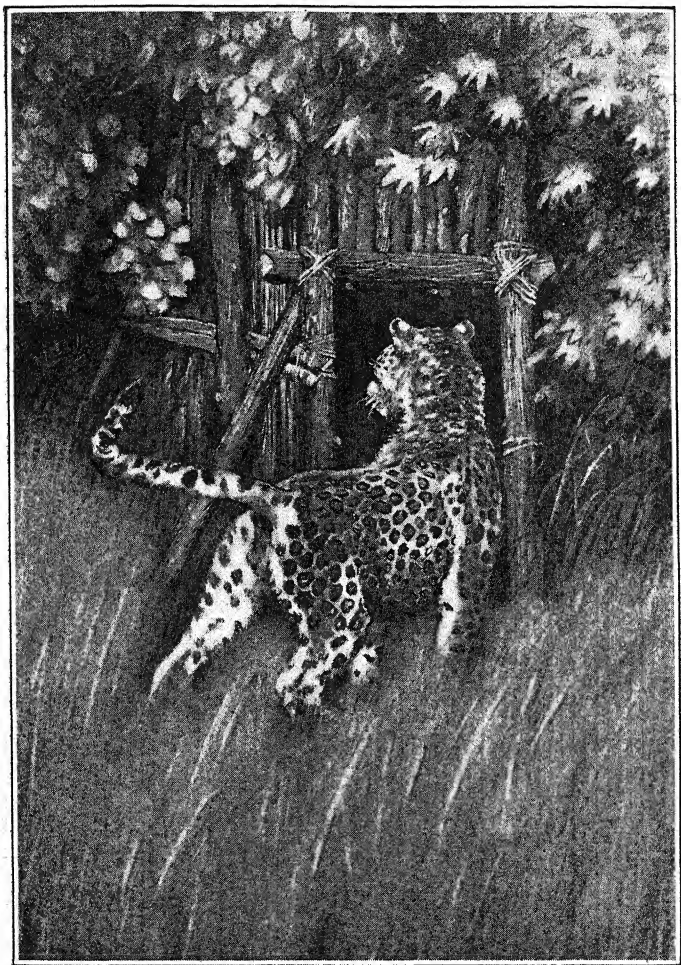
## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

the reflection of himself in a looking-glass, and the box had been put there by the Kaffirs expressly for him. In vain he tore round and round the cage, while the hunters came and looked at him and yelled with joy.

The women and children came, too, and so delighted were they all at his capture that they all had a wild, weird dance that evening in the Kaffir village, while Prowler tore and scratched at the sides of his hateful prison in a mad, useless endeavor to get out. But he did not get out. He stayed in it until a strange white man came and looked at him, and talked with the big Kaffir; after this he was taken away in some horrible jolting thing, and then in another mysterious something which went over the water, and at last he found himself in a clean house with iron bars all over the top and at the sides.

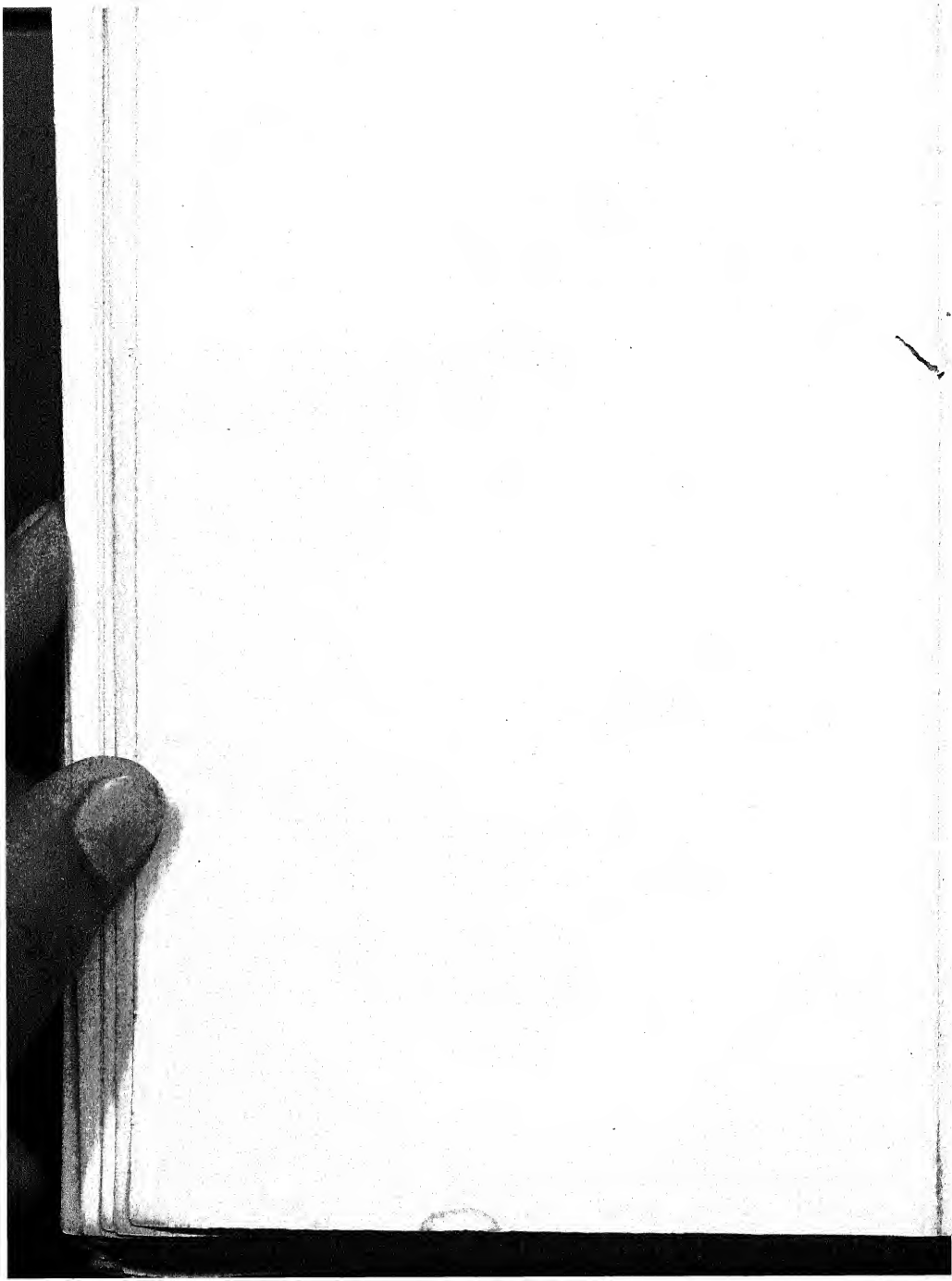
There was another Leopard on one side of him, and a Tiger on the other, but he had had enough fighting with Leopards, and when he got a little used to the place and to all the people coming to look at him, he would try to fight the





*Wood Creatures Afield*

"HE WAS SURPRISED TO SEE ANOTHER LEOPARD INSIDE"



## THE LEOPARD

Tiger, springing at the bars, tearing at the strong wire netting, and then racing back to his bench again to wait for another opportunity.

And after a time Prowler made so much fuss that he had to be moved. He would not let the Tiger alone, and the Tiger, who was just as savage as himself, did not see why he should be worried and tormented by an animal smaller than himself, and so they went on day after day, and week after week, and were both too stupid to see that it was very silly and quite useless.

Then Prowler was moved next to a Lion, and here he began the same thing over again. And so it went on, until at last they had such a lot of trouble with him that he was put into a cage away from the others and had a big, white sign hung over his cage with "Dangerous" written on it in big letters, and all the people would look at him with awe, and yet admire him tremendously, for he was a beautiful animal.

And Prowler would lie there and take it all as quite a matter of course, and as though he

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

had been accustomed to that sort of thing all his life. But he hated men, and was always on the lookout to do them some injury. True, the men were very good and kind to him, and his keeper always took great pains to see that he had plenty of good, fresh meat, clean water, and a nice, clean, comfortable house.

But Prowler had no gratitude. He would have eaten up his keeper any time if he could only have got at him, but he never had the chance. The keepers were very, very careful with everything connected with Prowler, for he was a very fierce and dangerous animal. And so he lived on, greatly admired by every one, and always having a larger crowd round his cage than any other animal in the Exhibition.

And after a time Prowler got quite used to it. He slept half the time, woke up and paced his cage restlessly when near feeding-time, ate his meal, and then went to sleep again. But all his food was given to him on end of a prong, and an extra rail was put round him, for, in spite of his sleepiness, his huge paw was always ready

## THE LEOPARD

to slip through the bars, and give any one who happened to be passing a hard tap.

And in this way he lived to a good old age, but was just as fierce and savage when he was old as when he was young and strong and lived a wild, free life in his native forests.



THE PENGUIN





## THE PENGUIN

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HERE had been a family quarrel, and the Mother Penguin and all the little Penguins were feeling extremely cross.

It was no wonder that the Mother Penguin was feeling cross, for she had been trying all day long to make her little ones leave the nest and go down to the seashore, where she wanted to teach them the proper way to fish. She had brought them up very carefully and taken a great deal of trouble and pains with them, and it certainly was rather vexing to find that the very first time she asked them to do something they became naughty and disobedient, and were just as obstinate as they could be.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

In the first place, she showed them the proper way to walk by getting off the nest, standing up with her funny little wings spread out, and her snow-white breast covered with small, close feathers held well forward. Then she strutted along in the correct Penguin manner, which was very dignified and important, although a trifle awkward. She stumbled a good deal, but this was because she kept looking at the little soft, downy forms of her babies and so did not notice all the odd stones and bits of loose rock which were lying about.

After this she walked back to the nest—if such a place could be called a nest—and did all she could to persuade the young ones to follow her. But the little Penguins only looked at her quietly, winked their curious eyes which always looked tearful, twisted their fluffy little bodies round in the nest, and then settled themselves down as before.

After a time, however, the Mother Penguin lost patience. All the other young Penguins in the place were beginning to walk quite nicely

## THE PENGUIN

now, and did a good bit of their own fishing, and she was anxious for her babies to do the same. So, waddling up to the nest she administered a sharp peck to each and prepared to go off by herself. This was serious, so they clumsily scrambled out of the nest, and did their best to do as their mother did.

The biggest one, Penny, did two steps quite well, but little Prin, who had always been small and delicate, could not manage it at all, and, what was more, did not try. Finding it very tiring to stand up, she just settled down again as soon as her mother had turned her back, and when she and Penny had turned a corner of rock, she scrambled back once more into the nest and settled herself comfortably.

The Mother Penguin, thinking the two chicks were following her, waddled on, and had nearly got to the shore when, on looking back, she found to her great dismay that she was alone and that neither of her children were to be seen anywhere. The fact was, after the first few steps Penny got tired, and, seeing an empty nest in a

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

nice comfortable corner, he just got into it and sat down, leaving his mother to go on by herself.

As soon as the poor mother bird found that neither of her little ones was with her, she uttered a hoarse croak and strutted back to the nest once more, meaning to give both the young Penguins a severe punishment.

But to her dismay, when she reached the nest it was quite empty and not a sign of a young Penguin could be seen anywhere. In terrible distress the poor little mother called and called, but no answer came, and as she looked at the empty nest which she had taken such trouble to make of nice dry leaf-stalks and pringle seed stones, her distress was pitiable.

She was just starting off again, when, to her great joy, she saw Penny coming towards her, and a fine time he was having of it to judge from his screams and cries. Holding himself bolt upright in the way he had seen his mother do, he scrambled along as best he could over the rough, stony ground and rock, and all the

## THE PENGUIN

other Penguins helped him on his way by pecking, chasing, and shouting at him in their hoarse voices.

How he ever got to his mother he never knew, but he was so thankful to see her again and so tired and weary that he scrambled on and on, and never stopped until he had reached her. But anxious as his mother had been about him, she was very angry now and punished him by giving him a hard peck.

This made Penny angry and he behaved badly, and was so extremely rude as to open his mouth at his mother, a thing no chick had ever done to her before. And just at that moment up came Prin in her quiet way as though nothing had happened, and so she got punished too, and this made her cross, and that was how the quarrel began, and why they were all feeling so cross that particular evening.

The fact was, both little Penguins were very hungry and wanted their supper, and both had been very, very frightened, and so, what with that and their mother's punishment and anger,

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

it was not much wonder that they both felt miserable.

This had gone on for some time, and the Mother Penguin was just beginning to think of their supper and of getting them some nice fresh fish—for she certainly did not mean to let them go hungry all night long—when a most peculiar-looking object was thrust into the nest and stroked the soft fluffy down of each of the little Penguins.

This curious-looking object was a man's hand, and the stroking did not hurt them a bit, but all three birds were terribly frightened, and the Mother Penguin stalked round, swelled out her white breast, and gave funny little hoarse cries, begging and imploring the enemy not to hurt her young ones. The enemy did not know what she said, but he could see how terribly frightened they all were, and so, as he had no intention of hurting them, he went quietly away, and left them all together once more.

And, somehow or other, the Mother Penguin forgot her anger, and could only think of the

## THE PENGUIN

joy of having her little ones safe again. And the little ones found it so natural to creep close to their mother in a time of danger like that, that they forgot all about the punishment, and were only too glad to be good and obedient little Penguins once more.

And their mother quietly wandered off to the seashore, and brought back a beautiful supper of nice fresh fish.

And after this they settled down for the night, the little ones nestling under their mother to keep warm, and the mother spreading her body contentedly over them. Prin nestled her head into her mother's warm breast, but Penny, with much difficulty, tucked his head under his tiny flipper as he had seen some of the grown-up Penguins do. Their mother shortened her neck, so as to bring her head close to her body, slanted her beak upwards and forwards, and, shutting her eyes tightly, went fast to sleep almost as soon as her little ones.

And after this the little Penguins were much more obedient and did as they were told, which

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

saved a lot of trouble both to their mother and to themselves, and then, oh, what good times they had!

One day their mother taught them how to go tobogganing.\* She led them up to the top of a gentle slope—not without a great deal of trouble, for the two little Penguins found it very difficult to go uphill at all, and kept tumbling back almost as fast as they got up—and after resting a little while at the top—for she was a very thoughtful mother—the old Penguin showed the two little ones how to lay themselves flat on their breasts, with their faces downhill, to lift up their beaks and little wings, and then just to let themselves go down the hill.

Penny did it very well, but not without many flutterings of his small heart, and reached the

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\*Penguins are extremely fond of gliding down slopes in this fashion. They settle themselves comfortably on their breasts and go to the bottom, evidently enjoying the motion. In many cases it appears to be a sort of pastime with them, and they present a most curious appearance when doing this.—AUTHOR.



## THE PENGUIN

bottom in safety, but Prin was nervous, and, coming across a big stone half-way down, gave it up, uttered a hoarse cry, and just stayed where she was until the other two came up again.

So this time the Mother Penguin kept close by her side, and went slowly and gently down the slope with her. Whenever they came across any stones, rocks, or any other obstacles, she showed the little Penguin how to either turn to one side with the help of her wings, or else lift herself over the obstacle, and after a few more trials both the little Penguins found it was quite easy.

They always found it a little difficult to get up to the top, because their small bodies and limbs were not adapted for climbing, but when they reached the top the coming down more than repaid them for the trouble. They would flop down on their breasts, make funny little cries of delight, and then, watching for their mother's signal, away they would go, gliding easily and safely to the bottom, and feeling as proud and important as any grown-up Penguin.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

One fine day, when all the Penguins were either strutting about in their peculiar, pompous fashion, pluming their feathers, or gliding down slopes, there suddenly appeared a stranger on the island, and this was a Man stranger whom they were all dreadfully afraid of, as he always carried things which held fire and smoke. One or two old Emperor Penguins, who were always on the lookout for danger, made a great to-do at once, and, uttering their peculiar duck-like cry, strutted boldly forward to meet him, and by their recklessness were very soon killed. But the cries of these old Penguins put the others on their guard, and away they all scuttled as fast as their awkwardness would let them.

The Mother Penguin was in a dreadful way. It was almost worse than that terrible time when Penny and Prin had been so naughty and she was unable to find them. Fortunately they happened to be just by a crevice of a rock, and into this they scuttled as soon as they possibly could. Not a sound did either of them make until they were absolutely sure that the enemy

## THE PENGUIN

had really gone off the island again. This the Mother Penguin made quite sure of before she allowed her little ones to even show their beaks outside once more.

But when she had actually seen the enemy go off in a boat, she waddled back, and, as they all quickly forgot danger when it was once over, they were soon feeling as happy as ever.

Then came a delightful day when their mother taught them to dive down to the bottom of the water and take walks among the seaweed. They were both good fishers by this time, and could almost keep themselves in food, but they had a great deal to learn yet, and had not half finished their education.

So off they started down to the shore, and although they certainly were funny-looking objects, and waddled along in the most awkward manner, they were very fine young birds for all that, and their good feeding, plentiful exercise, and good bringing up, had made them grow and develop in the most wonderful manner. Very proud and pleased their mother felt of them,

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

and considered that all the trouble she had taken was more than repaid.

When they arrived at the edge of the water, away they went, head over heels, with a terrific splash into the water, and for a few minutes nothing could be seen but a confused mass of black and white beaks, webbed feet, and spray. Then out they all came again, making leap after leap out of the water, forming short curves in the air, and then down with a big splash into the water again.

The Mother Penguin wanted them to dive down at once, but the two little ones were so happy and full of spirits that they were obliged to have a good frolic first, and when their mother saw how they enjoyed it she joined in too, for all she wanted was just to see them happy. But after awhile, they got a little tired, and scrambled through the surf to the shore, and struggled up among the black pebbles on the beach, very wet and dripping birds, but just as happy as they could be.

When they had recovered their breath and

## THE PENGUIN

had rested a little, the Mother Penguin went forward to show them the way to dive. Down went her beak and head into the water and up went her funny webbed feet, and the little ones followed in exactly the same manner, and did it as naturally as though they had never done anything else all their lives.

Down they went, gliding in between thick seaweed, and through the strongest waves as easily as though they were flying in the air like other birds; down and down until they reached a beautiful forest of delicate thread-like plants, some so soft and fluffy that they looked like the finest silk, while others looked like magnificent trees. All these plants were of the most beautiful colors too—green, and pink, and bright red, while some were of a dark, deep crimson.

When they reached these beautiful plants they stopped diving and rested on their feet, for they were at the bottom of the sea, and all these beautiful plants were seaweed. There were many other beautiful things there too—coral in great beds of curious shapes and sizes, some looking

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

like tiny caves or houses, and some looking almost like palaces; crabs, which gave them a lot of trouble, as they were spiteful creatures and pinched horribly; all kinds of shell-fish, some of which they ate, but did not care particularly for; small fish, which darted hither and thither, but which the little Penguins caught with wonderful quickness and enjoyed thoroughly; and all sorts of other nice things which would take too long to talk about.

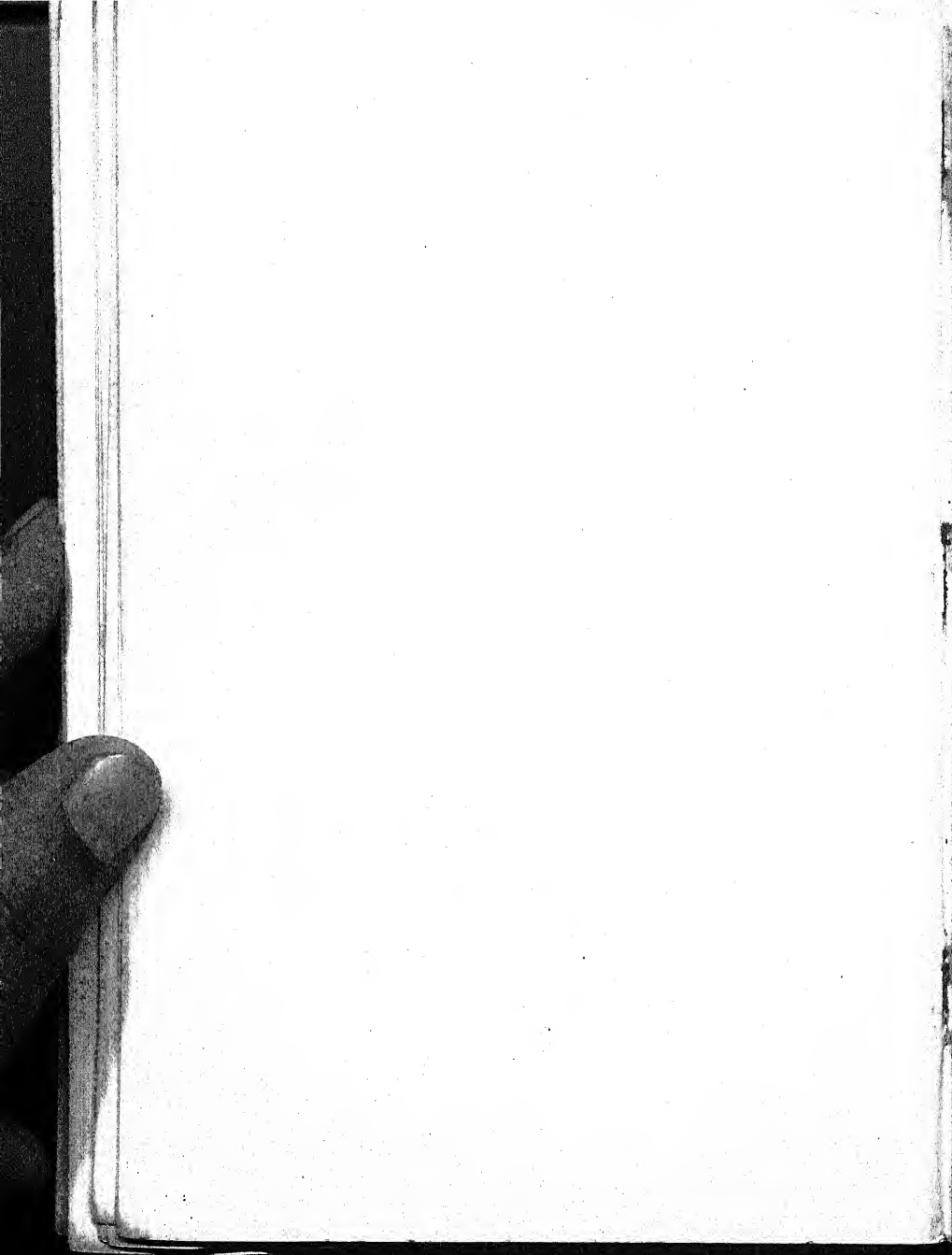
And the Mother Penguin and her little ones walked about in this beautiful place and enjoyed it thoroughly, but they were not able to stay down very long at a time, because they were obliged to come up every now and then to breathe. But they went down several times that day, and it was one of the most enjoyable and delightful times they had ever had.

But in time the young Penguins grew independent, and were able to get all their own food and look after themselves, and when this took place their mother was not sorry for she had worked very hard and faithful in bringing them

## THE PENGUIN

up, and began to feel she needed a little rest herself.

So one day, when she found they had left her entirely, and were forming part of the long line of Penguins on the ledges of the rocks, she took it quite calmly and settled down to have a good, comfortable time by herself. But she often looked at her children proudly, for they were undoubtedly two of the finest and most clever Penguins on the whole of Kerguelen Island, and could often be seen leading a troop of birds either to the water, or up to the rookeries, where the Penguins would sometimes collect in thousands.





THE RED DEER .



## THE RED DEER

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IN one of the thickest covers of a beautiful shady forest of Germany, a Red Deer was one day standing, looking placidly at the deepening shadows with her beautiful eyes, and wondering how soon she could venture out to get some food.

She had a double reason for being anxious, for she was a Mother Deer and a short distance away, artfully concealed in the high heather, were two pretty little fawns with spotted bodies and delicately formed legs and feet, small, well-shaped heads, and beautiful eyes like their mother's.

She had no fear of their being seen, for before

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

leaving them that morning she had made them lie down by giving each of them a gentle pressure with her soft nose, and they knew they ought not to move until she came back again. They both lay quite still, huddled up in their own peculiar fashion, with their noses turned to their tails, much in the same manner in which a dog lies, and the only sign of life was when they turned softly round to change their position, or took a quiet peep round with their large dark eyes.

At the same time that the Mother Deer was thinking about going back to them, they also were wondering when she would come, for they were beginning to feel very hungry and wanted their supper. Presently there was a little rustle in the heather, and, forgetting caution, the two little fawns sprang up, tried to balance themselves on their rickety little legs, and looked round eagerly.

But instead of their mother's graceful, dignified form, they saw, creeping stealthily and warily through the heather, an animal with a

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steel-gray furry coat, and a round, hairy, wicked face, with big cruel eyes that never winked, outstanding whiskers, and sharp-pointed ears with curious little tufts at the tops of them.

This was a lynx, or wildcat, and one of the Red Deer's deadliest enemies when fawns are about. The little fawns did not know what it was, but they knew, in some way or other, that it was something to be afraid of, and the cruel face with its tufted ears, and the sharp, terrible teeth, which it showed at sight of the fawns, made them shiver with fear.

In vain they called for their mother in their soft, gentle manner, while their slim, delicate bodies sank down again on the ground, the thin, weak legs refusing to hold them up any longer. Not a sound could be heard but the soft rustling of the heather as the wildcat made his way slowly but steadily towards them.

But the Mother Deer knew all about it. She was always careful to take up her position to the windward, so that she could catch the very faintest scent of a lynx, fox, or any other enemy

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who might be lingering round in her neighborhood. She had just decided that the June sun was sinking, and that it was time for her little ones' supper, when, borne on the soft evening air, there came to her the strong scent of a wildcat.

Shy and timid, like all Red Deer, in this case the Mother Deer forgot everything but the fact that there was a wildcat about, and that it was probably on the lookout for her fawns. In an instant she became nervous, restless, and anxious, but there was no sign of fear, for her motherhood made her think of nothing but the safety and protection of her children.

Could she only tell exactly where the enemy was it would not be so difficult, but a hidden foe always made her uneasy. She came out of the forest—for the wildcat was a long way off yet—and moved slowly across the patch of heather where her little ones were hidden. Then suddenly she stopped, her delicate legs and feet hidden, and only her reddish-brown body showing; her graceful head was turned to one side in

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a listening attitude; her whitish-gray throat was beating painfully; and her liquid brown eyes glancing in all directions, wide open and wild with fear.

Then the rank smell of the lynx grew stronger, and in a small pathway, caused by the bent-down sprays of the heather, she saw, to her horror, a full-grown lynx making straight for the hiding-place of her children. There was no more hesitation. From a gentle, shy creature starting and quivering at every sound, she was transformed, through her motherhood, into an angry, furious animal, daring and defiant, and ready to face anything, even death itself, to save the precious lives of her offspring.

With a wild bound forward she came upon the lynx with such appalling suddenness and with such a shower of kicks from her sharp hoofs, that, surprised and startled, he decided, after giving vent to his rage and disappointment by snarling fiercely and spitting violently, to go home and try again another time. So, hissing, spitting, and scolding in his furious pas-

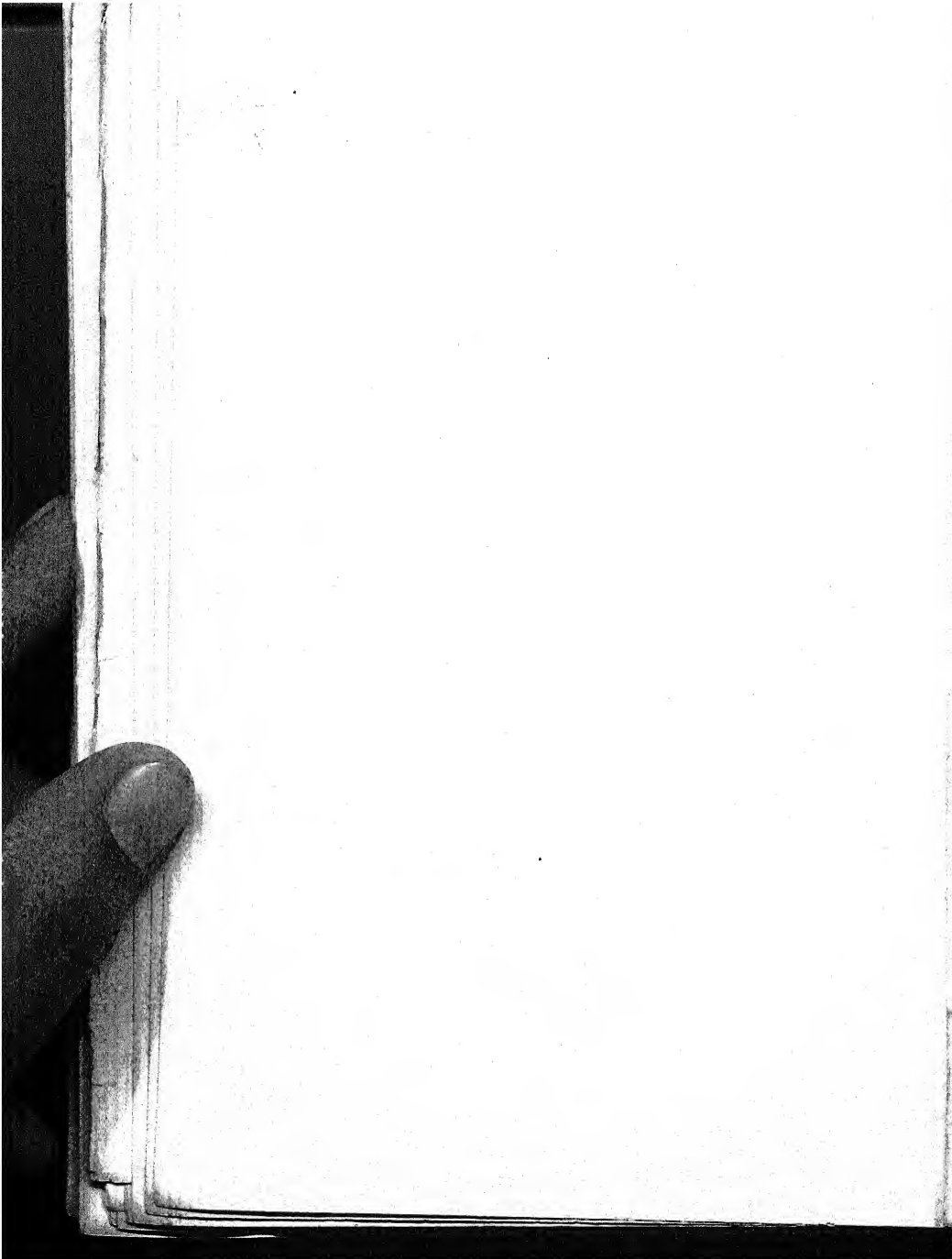
## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

sion, the lynx made off, looking back now and again to send another shower of hisses back at the Mother Deer, and hoping with all his heart that she might get killed, so that he could get the fawns after all.

But the Mother Deer did not get killed. She lived to bring up her babies; and very proud she was of them, for very few Red Deer have more than one fawn at a time, and she not only had two, but they were particularly fine young animals, healthy and strong. And so they all lived very happily together after this until the fawns were able to take care of themselves, and then the Mother Deer, having done her duty faithfully and well, went back to her husband and joined the herd again.



THE CONDOR



## THE CONDOR

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LIKE all large Vultures—and his species was the largest of all the birds of prey—Gawkes, the Condor, did extremely silly and stupid things sometimes, but perhaps the silliest thing he ever did was when he stood on a projecting ledge of one of the highest peaks of the Andes and played with an old bone.

It was part of the thigh-bone of an ox, and had been brought there by one of the other Condors to enjoy at his leisure. Gawkes was feeling in high spirits for some reason or other, and, being in a playful mood, decided to have a little game by himself. A small bird would have played with a twig in the same manner and looked pretty, graceful, and dainty, but there

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

was nothing either pretty, graceful, or dainty about Gawkes.

To begin with, he was too big and clumsy. His heavy, cumbersome body was about forty inches long, his large black feet strong and muscular, and the span of his wings, when stretched to their fullest extent, was nearly nine feet. His feathers were a dirty-looking black, with white in the wings, and a pure white ruff round his neck. It looked as though the feathers had been frightened by that white ruff, for not a single one grew beyond it. The rest of his neck and head were quite bare, being covered with a curious, rusty-looking skin, forming a wattle on his throat, another on his chest, and a third just behind his beak, which looked like a little crest.

He was about as ugly a bird as one could find anywhere, but his movements were uglier still. He would look at the bone with his stupid head on one side for a few minutes, then pick it up, spread out his huge wings, and career round and round in the most solemn manner. He generally managed to trip over something or other, and

## THE CONDOR

then down would go the bone, up would go his wings, and, pretending to be scared, he would walk clumsily off, lifting each wing simultaneously with a foot in a heavy, awkward fashion.

After awhile, he would look back, turn himself round, and, wobbling over to the bone again, pick it up, spread out his wings, and career gravely round and round as before. Every now and then he would give a peculiar little hiss—that being the only sound he could make, having no voice—and then begin all over again.

So taken up had Gawkes been with his game, that he had not noticed that all the other Condors were making their way to the plains below. But in one of his pauses he happened to look down, and his wonderful keen eyes suddenly noticed a number of Condors feeding on the carcass of a Guanaco lying in the valley.

Forgetting the bone, Gawkes walked away from the ledge of the rock—for he was unable to rise from level ground unless he had a little run first—and then, shambling forward hastily,

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

lifted himself in the air, circled round once or twice over the spot where the Condors were feeding, and then swooped down in the midst of them.

But, alas! while he had been playing on the rocks, his companions had eaten every single scrap of carrion they could find. The skin and inside were gone, and nothing was left but the biggest bones, and these were picked as clean as though they had been washed.

Now, Gawkes was hungry, although he had not thought much about it until he saw the other Condors feeding, and, being angry, he gave those nearest him some hard pecks with his powerful beak, which they returned promptly. One old Condor, noted for his bad temper and quarrelsome nature, gave Gawkes three blows in return for each one he had given, and in a very few minutes he and Gawkes were having a terrible fight.

With outspread wings, and with their wrinkled, rust-colored bald heads getting a peculiar purple from rage, the Condors fought,

## THE CONDOR

always aiming at one another's heads and eyes, and inflicting terrible blows with their beaks and strong claws.

When it was finished Gawkes was an awful sight. His feathers were ruffled and torn, there were one or two bare places on his body, and he had lost an eye. And all this really came about by his playing with that old bone instead of keeping his eyes open and noticing what was going on, as all sensible Condors should do.

Perhaps it was on this account that, after this, he kept more to the plains; he went to the heights sometimes, because he had a wife up there who had laid two white eggs on the rock—she never made a nest—and he took a great interest in them. When, after a time, two funny little birds came out of the eggs covered with soft gray down, he was more interested still, but he was always glad to get back to the plains again, and when, after a few months, the young birds were getting big and strong, and rather inclined to be rude and indifferent, he grew tired of them, and left the heights altogether.

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By this time his feathers had grown again, and he was well and strong once more, but he still missed his eye, and found it very awkward at times, especially when there were enemies about and he needed to look out in all directions. But he got along very well according to his view of it, although he was getting to be well known by the Gauchos (herdsmen) for his dreadful depredations among the sheep and cattle.

He was particularly fond of young calves, and, although he did not carry them off, he killed and injured a great many more than he could possibly eat. It was a favorite pastime of his to choose a brilliantly sunny day, and when some foolish young calf or lamb was standing facing the dazzling rays of the sun, to swoop down, pick out its eyes, and then tearing out one or two dainty morsels, do the same thing to some other poor creature.

He generally managed to do enough mischief to cause the death of the animals, and, after a time, the Gauchos knew it was a one-eyed Condor who was doing the mischief by the way in which



## THE CONDOR

he held his head, and various other signs. So they kept a careful lookout for him, being determined to kill him.

But Gawkes was a sly and cunning old rascal and was not to be caught easily, and in spite of their schemes it seemed for a time as though he were too old a bird to be caught at all. He knew men were easily frightened, and very often, when the Gauchos had laid a trap for him and were just waiting for him to come down, he would come down with a vengeance, beat his huge wings over their heads, try to peck at their eyes or head, and hiss all the time, and had it not been that these men knew the ways of Gawkes and his kind, and beat him off bravely, he would very soon have put an end to them.

He found out all their little tricks and maneuvers, was suspicious when there was cause for suspicion, and instead of flying boldly down, as on some occasions, would keep carefully away whenever they had taken particular pains to try to induce him to get caught.

Gawkes once was nearly caught himself, but

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not by men. His keen eyes saw a young animal lying nearly motionless one morning just before daybreak, and with a little awkward run and a few circles in the air, down swooped Gawkes right on the top of the animal, to find himself suddenly confronted by a Puma.

The Puma had spent half the night tracking and getting the animal, and he was not at all inclined to give up his prize, especially to a Condor, and his sudden fierce onslaught with blazing eyes and extended claws quite startled Gawkes, and his inability to rise without having a little run first was nearly the cause of his death. For the Puma sprang with a catlike leap, and so nearly caught him that Gawkes actually lost a few of his tail-feathers.

He could, had he only felt so inclined, have defended himself fairly well with his terrible beak and claws, but Gawkes did not care for Pumas or their savage ways, and was only too thankful when he found himself rising in the air, where he knew no Puma, however savage, could follow him. And the Puma spat out his

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tail-feathers in disgust and went back to the animal he had killed and had a delicious breakfast of fresh meat, while Gawkes hovered disconsolately overhead, waiting patiently until the Puma took his departure so that he might have what was left.

He was more careful after this adventure for a time, but he soon forgot the Puma, and, as the men did not succeed in catching him, he grew more bold than ever. And as Gawkes grew bolder, so the Gauchos got more cautious, until one fine day Gawkes was caught in a trap.

Feeling rather hungry, he had swooped down to the plain, and, seeing a nice young calf, he determined to get him. For some reason or other, however, he was a little suspicious, and did not go direct to him at once. He could see that the calf was dying, and he decided to wait a little while, for he was not at all particular about his food in some ways. As a matter of fact, he liked carrion, it was much more to his taste than fresh meat, and had more of a flavor.

So he waited patiently, always keeping his eye

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

carefully on the calf and taking a good look all round now and then. But at last the poor little calf gave a pathetic gasp, and then lay perfectly still. Now was the time.

With a few awkward hops and skips, Gawkes ran forward, flew up into the air, circled gracefully round a few times—the only time he could be graceful was when he was flying—and then pounced down on the calf's body. He had had two delicious morsels, young, juicy, and tender, when a curious noise—thrubadee—thrubadee—thrub—was heard, and the next moment, before he even knew there was an enemy near, something flew over his head and round his neck, and gasping, struggling, and flapping violently with his huge wings, Gawkes, the Condor, was fighting for his breath and life.

The Guachos had put the dying calf there purposely, knowing that some Condor—probably the one-eyed one—would be sure to find it out, and had been waiting, meanwhile, a little way off, with their lassos ready. The moment Gawkes had settled on the calf's body, they had

## THE CONDOR

set spurs to their horses, and one of the lassos, thrown with unerring aim, had settled neatly over his head and round his neck.

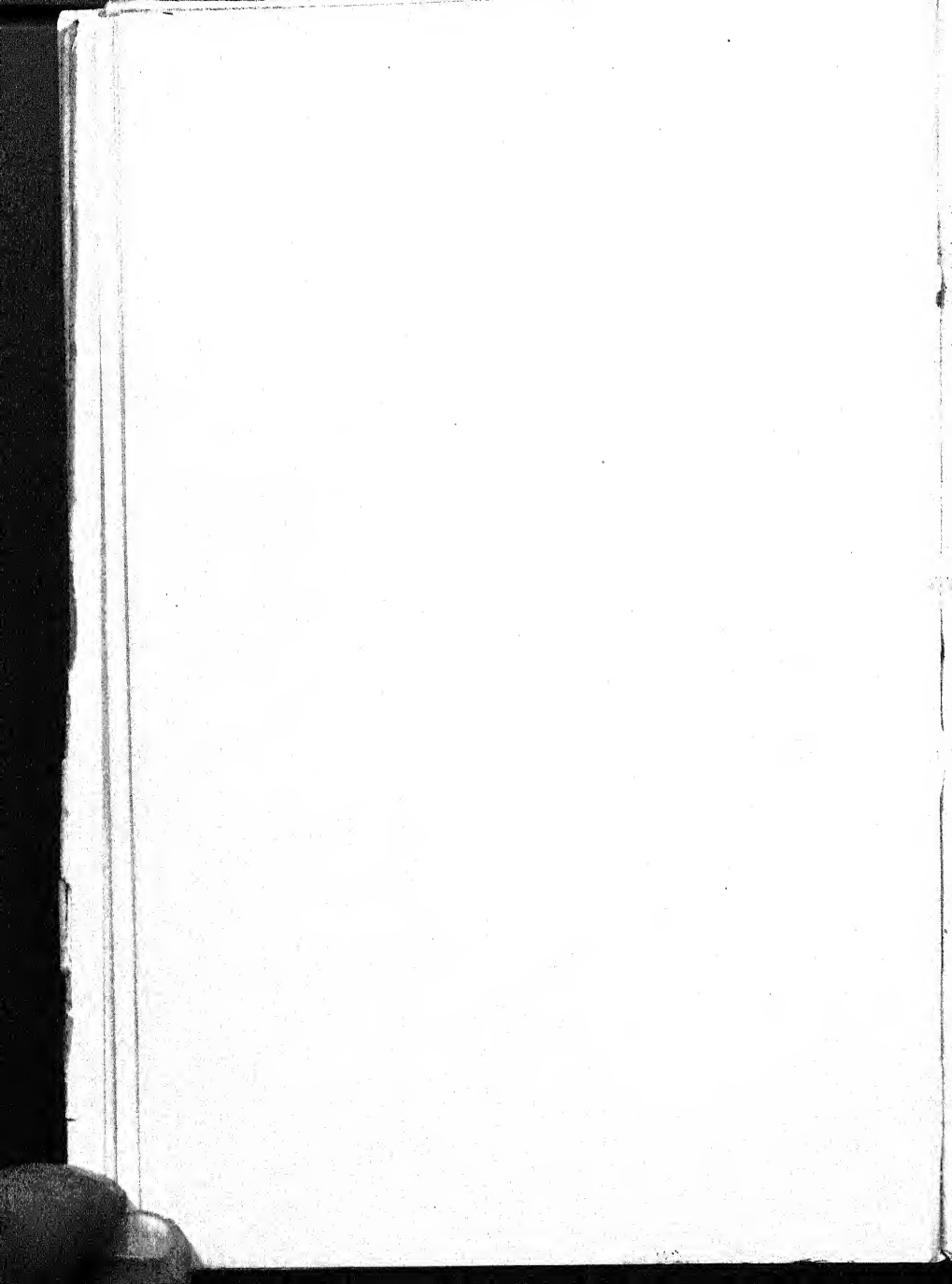
Gawkes did not give up even then without a fearful struggle, and it needed great care to escape some hard knocks from those outspread, powerful wings, which beat and flapped frantically in that last struggle for life and freedom. But it was all up with Gawkes this time, and when his huge body sank limp and lifeless on the ground, the Gauchos raised a shout of joy.

And then they decided to have him mounted, for he was a splendid specimen, and keep him as a trophy, but they had only one eye put in his head to remind them of the reason they had been able to catch him.

For, had Gawkes only had two eyes, there is every probability that he would have been able to see his enemies in time, for, naturally, they took care to gallop up on his blind side, which caused him to lose time. And this is why his playing with that bone up on the rocks was the silliest and most stupid thing Gawkes ever did.



THE LEMMING





## THE LEMMING

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ON one of the mountains of the Scandinavian Peninsula, there lived one of the largest and most important colonies of Lemmings in all Norway.

There were some thousands of these small, brownish-black animals, very like Marmots or Hamsters in appearance, with their rat-like snouts and faces, short, furry bodies about six inches long, and little tails measuring not more than an inch in length. They all had tiny ears and feet, but on the soles of their feet were short, thick hairs, which prevented their slipping about in frosty weather.

Very important creatures these small animals considered themselves, but the most important was Leader, an abnormally large, strong Lem-

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

ming, who was noted for his fights, not only among his own kind, but even among the Humans, who sometimes invaded the colony.

When these impertinent Humans were seen approaching, all the Lemmings would get wildly excited, sit up on their hind quarters, and squeak and grunt as though to dare them to come any nearer. But Leader and a few others would do more than this. They would squeak and grunt their hardest first of all—and they sounded just like Guinea-pigs when they did this—but if this had no effect, they would go over to the Humans and bite their trousers, or boots, and scratch them with their claws in the most vicious manner, and the worst of it was, that the Humans would generally laugh at it all, although they got some very bad bites and scratches at times, and, if the Lemmings did not go to their burrows, they would often get killed for being so impudent.

This was one of the reasons that the Lemmings always did their best to frighten all strangers away. They liked to keep their colony

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to themselves, but very often strangers came just the same and did them a lot of mischief.

They had had a very quiet winter. Leader and his wife had built a nice large nest in their tunnel through the snow, with several other little tunnels leading to it, and when it was all ready and lined with dry grass and leaves woven with hair, five little Lemmings made their appearance one day and filled it up. They looked just like naked little mice, but Leader and his wife thought a great deal of them, and worked extremely hard in feeding and looking after them. When summer came, the little Lemmings were able to find their own food, which consisted of reindeer moss, grass, the catkins of the birch-tree, and various kinds of roots. As soon as they were able to take care of themselves, Leader and his wife soon forgot all about them, and had a quiet and happy summer.

It had been a very dry summer, and, although there had been a bountiful supply of food, especially lichen, reeds, and so forth, towards the autumn everything began to have a tasteless,

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withered, and unsatisfying flavor, until at last there was very little food to be had at all. The colony had grown to be frightfully overcrowded, too, and, whether it was through all this, I do not know, but for some reason or other the Lemmings began to get restless and uneasy, and extremely disagreeable.\*

They were all sitting quietly one day—some at the entrance to their burrows, some inside, and others on any odd stumps or rocks—when suddenly Leader and some of the biggest and strongest of the Lemmings got so restless and excited that they scarcely seemed to know what they were doing. They rushed about, first to one place and then to another, sat up and squeaked and grunted in their fiercest manner, although not a stranger of any kind was to be seen, until they made such a noise that all the other Lemmings came out to see what all the fuss was about.

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\*It is supposed that these peculiar migrations of the Lemmings arise from a scarcity of food and overcrowding, but no definite conclusion seems to have been reached.—AUTHOR.

## THE LEMMING

It was wonderful where they all came from, for, before very long, every burrow, nook, stump and cranny seemed to pour out Lemmings by the thousand. In a very short time the earth seemed covered with a brownish mantle which moved incessantly, and squeaked and tussled in the most extraordinary manner.

And all this time Leader and his big companions never once stopped their squeaking and grunting, but when every Lemming in the whole colony seemed to have come out, there was a little stillness, and then Leader and his fellows simultaneously led the way down the hill, and in a perfectly straight line across country.

And suddenly all the Lemmings seemed to get half crazy, and to be possessed by some overwhelming instinct, for they knew now what they were going to do. They were all going to migrate, and a Lemming migrant doesn't care for anything or anybody. He gets so fierce and savage that he will attack anything, and if he is killed it doesn't much matter. There are some thousands coming after him, who are only too

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ready to take up the battle and come to the same end as himself.

Leader had never felt so reckless in his life, and as he and his companions led the way they allowed nothing to stop them—nothing to make them even turn to one side. They took a straight line all through their long journey, and if a stack of hay or corn came in their way, they ate their way through it, and so caused untold damage. Nothing stopped their course unless it was a high rock, which was too smooth and perpendicular to be climbed, and they made their way through grass and corn-fields, leaving a terrible track of damage and desolation in their rear.

The poor farmers were in despair. They knew only too well what a Lemming migration meant, and also knew that they were quite powerless to prevent it. Nothing could stop these animals once they had started on their journey. On they went, climbing hills and mountains, swimming lakes and rivers—for, although they avoided water at other times, they cared for

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nothing when migrating—and never resting except for a short time at night, when they generally improved the occasion by eating up everything in the way of vegetation they could get hold of.

Even the villages were not safe. On they went; swarms upon swarms of these small dark animals, tearing along in their mad haste and coming to all sorts of untimely ends on the way, followed all the time by numbers of birds overhead, who waited patiently until some of the feebler animals died and then swooped down on their bodies.

And it was, perhaps, the villages that suffered most terribly. For, as they went on through the small towns, some of the Lemmings tumbled into wells and fountains, streams, and rivulets, and their dead bodies tainted the water, and the tainted water gave the poor villagers a terrible fever called "Lemming Fever," from which they and their children died by hundreds.

Very often it was unavoidable, for not a stream or well but what contained a few of these

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

animals. It was generally only the worn-out and exhausted Lemmings who were drowned in this manner, but very often the wells would be too steep for any to climb out when once they had fallen in, and so they suffered the same fate as the others.

The amount of damage and mischief done by these little animals when on these peculiar journeys is appalling, and it often takes years to get things straight again. Even the cattle suffer, for many refuse to eat any grass or herbage that has been walked over by a Lemming, so it was a terrible time.

But Leader cared not. He and his companions went on and on, and never seemed to notice that their numbers were gradually getting fewer and fewer. For now, in addition to the birds overhead, there were various four-footed enemies following them and on the watch for any breakdowns on the way. And what they didn't finish the birds overhead did, and what with this and some of the Lemmings dying from disease, large numbers were left behind, and had it not



## THE LEMMING

been for the animal scavengers, the pestilence they left in their trail would have been far more terrible than it was.

Leader's wife had died long ago, but he did not even know it, and certainly did not care. All he and the big Lemmings thought about was getting on, on, on, and it was not until they had been over a year on their journey that they began to feel a little weary. But weariness did not stop them. Not a bit of it.

They swept over the land just the same, and, as the migration had now become known, everybody watched their approach with terror and dismay. The men took all the precautions they could, while the women clasped their little ones to them and wondered whether they would die of the pestilence which was sure to follow?

And then one day Leader and all the other Lemmings, having climbed to the top of a hill, suddenly saw the sea lying below them, sparkling and glistening in the sunlight. And down the hill they went, helter-skelter, tumbling over one another in their wild haste, and never stop-

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

ping until they had rushed headlong into the sea, where they were all drowned. And so, Leader came to a miserable end after all.

And why the Lemmings do this no one has ever yet been able to find out. Fortunately, a migration only occurs about once in ten or fifteen years, for which the farmers and villagers are only too thankful. Were it to take place more often, there would probably be neither farmers nor villagers, and the country would be in a terrible state indeed.

# THE MONITOR



## THE MONITOR

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OR three long hours had Munchen, the Monitor, been waiting in vain for some unsuspecting small creature to wander forth and near enough for him to catch and eat.

He had been very patient for a time, lying with his scaly, dust-colored body on the rough, stony ground, reveling in the glaring sun. The only movements he made were with his curious eyes—sometimes dull and expressionless, at others, fiery, quick, and cruel—and with his long, black, and shiny tongue. This tongue was so like a snake's, with its deep fork at the end, and the lightning-like rapidity with which it darted in and out, that, had only Munchen's scaly lizard body been hidden, one would have

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

thought the tongue belonged to some huge python.

He had been longing for a nice fat frog all day, and, although he had found a whole nestful of eggs and eaten them early in the morning, he was still hungry and longed for something more. He had enjoyed himself by taking up each one in his mouth (they were crocodile's eggs and beautifully fresh), raising his head, and then cracking the shell with a squeeze of his jaws, and letting the contents run down his throat.

He would have liked a few more, but he felt too lazy to exert himself, and he saw no signs of any near him. He was rather particular about his food, and never touched vegetables or green stuff of any kind; he liked a meat diet, and was fond of any young animals, birds, frogs, or crabs, and the younger and more tender they were the better.

But, for some reason or other, food seemed scarce on this particular day, and Munchen lay there lazily watching the crocodiles move in and

## THE MONITOR

out of the river Nile, while the African sun poured down, in a dazzling whiteness, so blinding in its effect that even a Monitor's eyes closed every now and then, as though unable to help it.

Presently, however, a fine, full-grown frog hopped almost in front of Munchen's very mouth, and, although such a heavy, sleepy-looking reptile a few minutes before, in an instant Munchen became one of the most active of all the Lizard tribe, and, with a final thrust of that long, black, shiny tongue, he made one quick movement—so quick that before the frog realized where he was, or the danger that threatened him, he had received a sharp, quick bite, and Munchen had swallowed the fat frog he had been longing for all day.

But it did not give him as much pleasure as he expected, for in his hurry Munchen had not noticed that it was one of those horrid spur-toed frogs who are so silly as to have three sharp nails on each of their hind feet just like little spurs, and these little spur-like nails were any-

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

thing but comfortable when swallowed. In vain Munchen gulped and gulped, and shot his long tongue in and out—he could feel those sharp nails just the same, and it spoilt the pleasure of the meal.

But at this moment something happened which made him forget all about the frog, and even about the frog's nails. This something was a small party of men moving in his direction. Now, Munchen disliked men and always avoided them when possible, so he promptly carried his body, with its long tail, short legs, and five-toed feet, to a nice crevice near by, where he hoped he should not be noticed. He laid himself flat against the rock—the color of which was very much the shade of his own body—and kept so still that had the men not seen him at first, they would probably not have noticed him at all.

Unfortunately for Munchen, a Monitor was the very thing the men were looking for, and had been looking for, for some time, so they took care not to lose sight of it, and hurried up to the crevice as fast as they could.



## THE MONITOR

Munchen kept perfectly still and moved not a muscle, even keeping his tongue concealed in the sheath in his throat, although the quickened throbbing showed that he was troubled and frightened. At first the men were a little nervous and kept at a safe distance, but when they saw how quiet and gentle the Monitor appeared, they became more venturesome and did their best to persuade him gently to leave the rock and turn round.

But Munchen knew better. There were several little projections on the surface of the rock which Munchen grasped with his four five-toed feet with so strong a hold that it was in vain the men tried at last to move him by force. It was like trying to move the rock itself, and they retired after awhile, panting and breathless, and at a loss what to do next. They had no intention of giving him up, but they could not carry the rock away, and at present it appeared to be the only way of obtaining the Monitor.

So they talked it over, and after awhile one man suggested that they should put ropes round

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

his legs and pull him off that way. This was a good idea, but the difficulty was that they had no rope, so one man finally agreed to fetch one or two, while the others kept watch to see that the Monitor did not get away.

But Munchen never attempted to get away; he stayed just where he was, a quiet, inanimate figure clinging tightly to the rock, his head and body still and motionless, but his eyes keeping watch, and his full-looking throat gulping and throbbing painfully with excitement. The men never once took their eyes off him, except when they cast a casual glance at the crocodiles a little way below, some of whom were basking in the sun, looking like wooden logs, and others moving heavily and clumsily in and out the murky waters of the Nile.

It was not long before the other man returned, and then all three men proceeded to carefully fasten some strong ropes round the hind and fore legs of Munchen, while Munchen kept perfectly still, although he was now only waiting his opportunity.



*Wild Creatures Afield*

"ONE OF THEM WAS KNOCKED OVER LIKE A BALL"



## THE MONITOR

"We shall very soon get him off now," one of the men said with an air of triumph, but he was mistaken. The ropes were strong and so were all three men, but when first one man had pulled and strained with all his might, and then another, and another, Munchen was still clinging to the rock and they were no farther on than before.\* Munchen was getting angry now, but he was not going to give in, and so, even when two men pulled together and the ropes strained and squeaked, he tried his best to cling to the rock.

But the strength of two full-grown, muscular men was too much even for a Monitor, and so it happened that at last Munchen felt himself leaving the rock, and, wild with fury, he turned round in his active way, and Monitors can be wonderfully quick when they feel inclined, flew at his captors and did his best to bite them, or strike them with his powerful tail.

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\*The strength of Monitors is extraordinary. The above is a true incident.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

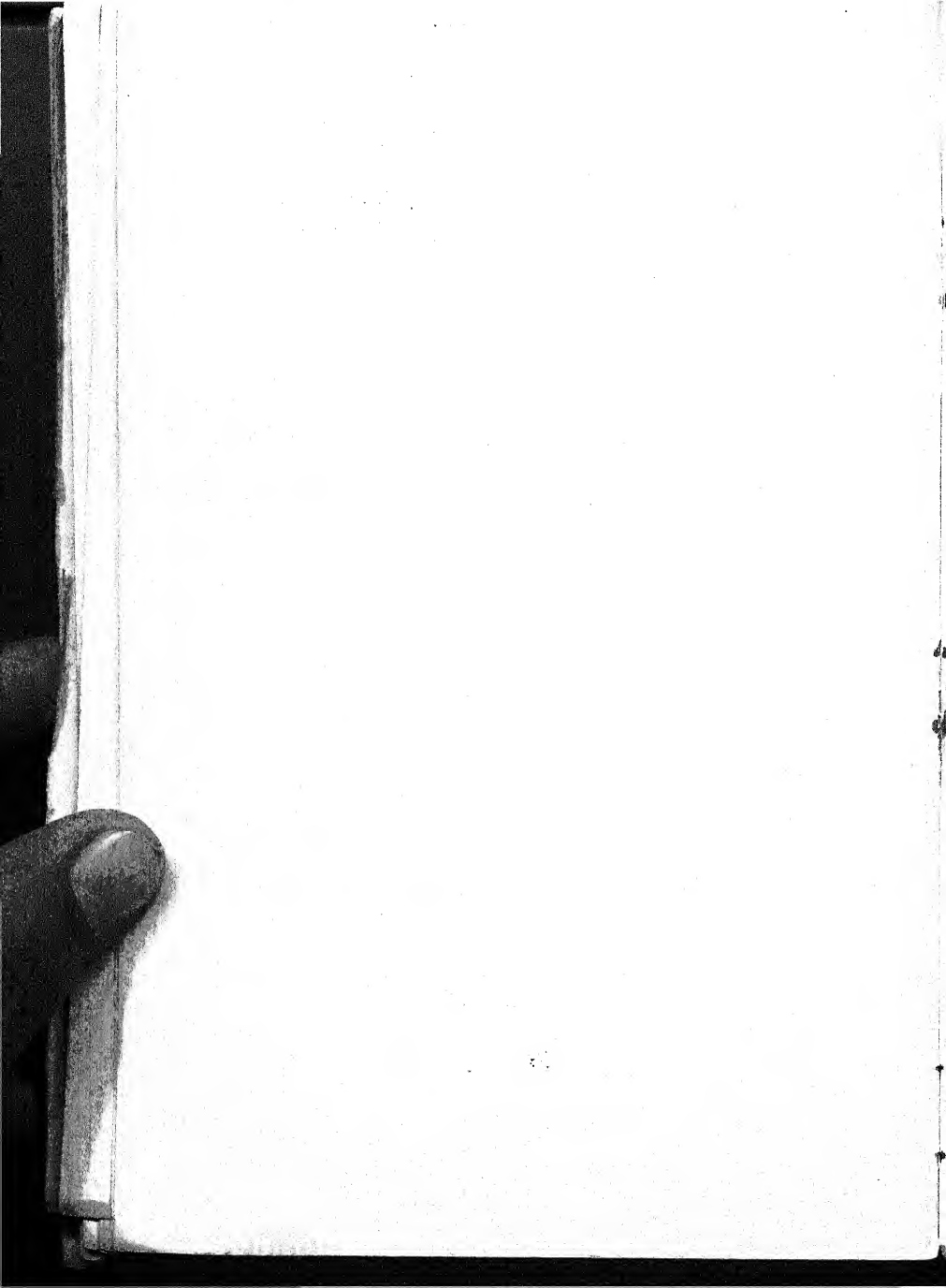
The attack was so sudden and unexpected that, for a moment, the men were startled, especially as one of them was knocked over like a ball with a side stroke from the Monitor's tail, and the sight of that dreadful tongue darting in and out, and the lashing of that muscular tail, startled them still more. But they dodged cleverly, and in some way or another the ropes got wound all round Munchen, and he was finally carried off in triumph, although his captors took very great care to keep out of the reach of that tongue.

And when they arrived home, and came to examine him, they found that every one of the Monitor's sharp, strong claws had been broken off in his efforts to keep his foothold. But in time the claws grew again, and Munchen seemed none the worse for his terrible adventure.

He was kept in a nice glass house, where people came to look at him, and where they gave him really nice things to eat and plenty of them. In some curious way they seemed to know just what he liked, and he had a fine time of it.

## THE MONITOR

He happened to be a particularly fine specimen, and measured nearly seven feet in length, so that generally his glass house was surrounded by a crowd, who watched him with great interest. Munchen didn't mind, only sometimes he would get angry, and then he would shoot out his tongue, gulp convulsively, and scratch at the glass with his claws just to show them what he *could* do if he liked.





## THE GLUTTON



## THE GLUTTON

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**O**NE bright, clear, frosty night, Graball the Glutton, sauntered forth to see what he could find in the shape of food. He was frightfully hungry, although he had had an enormous feed the night before, but he always had a ravenous appetite, and could eat just double the amount of food at a time of any other animal of his size, and was never happy unless he was gorging himself.

As he walked clumsily and heavily along, all the little moles, rats, mice, voles, and insects who were not asleep, scuttled away in terror, while some of the little birds overhead fluttered about uneasily. They all knew the Glutton and dreaded him as one of their greatest enemies.

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But on this particular night, Graball was not thinking of them at all. He wanted something bigger, and knew where there were some traps which an Indian trapper was kind enough to set every night in order to catch some of the Glutton's favorite animals. Many a good feed had Graball had in this way, and many a time had that Indian trapper vowed he would one day catch the Glutton himself. But Graball cared not; he often sprung the very trap which had been specially baited for himself, took out the bait and ate it, and then quietly walked off again.

He knew he was walking into danger on this particular night, but he was daring enough for anything. So he stumbled on in his clumsy way through the thick North American forest, climbing over rough shrubs and trees, stepping comfortably over the frozen ground (for the bottoms of his feet were covered with thick fur, which prevented his slipping), and even swimming streams where the ice was broken, for he allowed nothing to stand in his way when he wanted food.

## THE GLUTTON

When he arrived at the trapping-place he was delighted to find that all the traps were baited with large pieces of delicious fresh meat, and he at once proceeded to spring each one and then take out the bait and eat it. He had done this to three traps and then came to a fourth. But there was something about this fourth trap which made him suspicious. It looked all right, but in some curious manner Graball knew there was danger, and, instead of springing the trap in his usual manner, he sat down and looked at it.

As he sat there an Indian, who had been watching him, silently crept forward and took careful aim. Another moment and Graball would have been killed, but at that very moment a rabbit ran straight over the trap, which closed sharply on one of his hind legs with a snap, and his shriek of agony startled the Indian and he missed his aim. When the smoke cleared away, there was neither Glutton nor rabbit to be seen, for Graball had taken advantage of that moment, dragged the poor little rabbit out of the

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trap and made off so swiftly through the thick wood that it was in vain the Indian hunted in all directions.

The Indian made a little guttural noise, but beyond that he did not seem to be put out, although it was the first time he had missed his aim for many years. He meant to have that Glutton some time, and he thought of a novel plan which he intended to try the next time there was snow.

Meantime, Graball had eaten a most dainty meal, which would have been perfect had there been more of it, but one rabbit was not very much for a Glutton, so he proceeded to dig up some nice little stores which a careful and economical weasel had stored up in what he thought was a beautiful hiding-place. But a Glutton has wonderful powers of finding out these hiding places, and has no scruples about rifling them, so Graball ate all the weasel's stores, which happened to be the remains of some young animals, and then felt he had done a good night's work.

Having had such a good supper, Graball did

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not trouble about looking for any more food that night, but on his way home he came upon a funny-looking little wooden hut, and, seeing that it was empty, and always being ready for mischief, Graball wandered in and looked round.

There was a rough bed in one corner, some pots and pans in another, evidently used for cooking, and a big strong ax—such as woodcutters use—in a third. Graball had no use for pots or pans, or indeed anything in the hut, but, true to his name, he grabbed one or two of the cooking utensils, and, dragging them outside the hut and into a shady part of the forest, he buried them deep down in the earth so that the owner would not be likely to find them again.

Then—for he dearly loved stealing things, no matter how useless they were to him—he went back to the hut to get some other things. The rough blanket on the bed was the next thing he decided to take, and, although it was rather difficult to carry, as it would keep getting under his feet and kept tripping him up, he held on to it with his strong teeth, and when he had buried

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that—which gave him a lot of trouble—he went back to the hut the third time.

For Graball thought he had found a prize. As he was going out of the hut with the blanket, the firelight caught the sharp, glistening edge of the ax in the other corner, and Graball determined to get that at any price. So this time he wandered back in his heavy, clumsy way a little more quickly, for he was longing to get to sleep, but sleep was not to be thought of until he had got that beautiful thing in the corner. He caught hold of the blunt part of the ax first, but he did not like the cold feel of the steel, and then grasped it by the wooden handle instead.

This was much better, and, thinking nothing of the weight, Graball stumbled towards the door with his treasure. But whether the sound of a man's footsteps outside crunching the frosty ground made him nervous, or whether it was the rough, uneven stones which made him stumble, he never knew, but suddenly he had an awful fall, he felt a sharp, keen pain, and it was as



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much as he could do to drop his beautiful prize and get away before the owner caught him.

He left a trail of blood behind him, for he had been badly cut, and in this way the owner of the hut, who was the very Indian who had tried to catch him, found out where he lived and lay in wait for him. But it was some time before Graball left his burrow again, for he was very, very sick for a long while, and did not care even to eat very much. And at last the Indian came to the conclusion that he had died in his burrow and went away overjoyed to think the robber of his traps was dead.

But Graball was not dead, nor did he die of this wound. He got better after awhile and was more morose and sullen than ever, but he made the most of his time when he could not go out by staying just at the mouth of his burrow and watching all the smaller animals go by. It made him mad to think he could not run after them just then, but he made some fine discoveries by all this watching.

He found out there was a fine young fox living

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close by; plenty of mice and rats, who had been so foolish as to make their burrows close to his; and several kinds of reptiles which were easy to catch. So he contented himself with catching the smaller animals until he was quite well again, and then he began to think about the fox.

His long rest and seclusion seemed to have made him stronger than ever, and, although he still felt a little stiffness in the place where the ax had so badly cut him, he was every bit as vicious and active as before. So one night, feeling better and stronger than ever, Graball determined to dig that fox out of his burrow and make a nice supper off him.

He had nearly reached the fox's lair, when he suddenly met the fox himself, and, had it not been that Graball was lazy, he would have run after him, for he could be wonderfully quick when he liked. But he did not feel inclined for running just then, so he resorted to his natural sagacity and cunning, and, pretending not to see the fox, shambled off in another direction, limping painfully all the way.

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The fox was cunning, too, and, as he knew the enormous strength a Glutton possessed, he thought it wiser to avoid him, although he was lame, so he, too, turned off in another direction and took no notice of Graball, who now wended his way to another burrow.

Now it happened that this other burrow was where the fox's wife and family had just made their home, their last quarters not having been big enough for a family. It was the deserted lair of an old bear, and was nice and roomy, and here they had all taken up their residence only a few days before. And as Mr. Fox wended his way homewards, Graball also made his way to the same spot, getting there a little while before the fox. By the time the fox arrived home, Graball had, with his short-pointed muzzle and broad, rounded head, burrowed so far into the earth that only just the end of his short, bushy tail was visible.

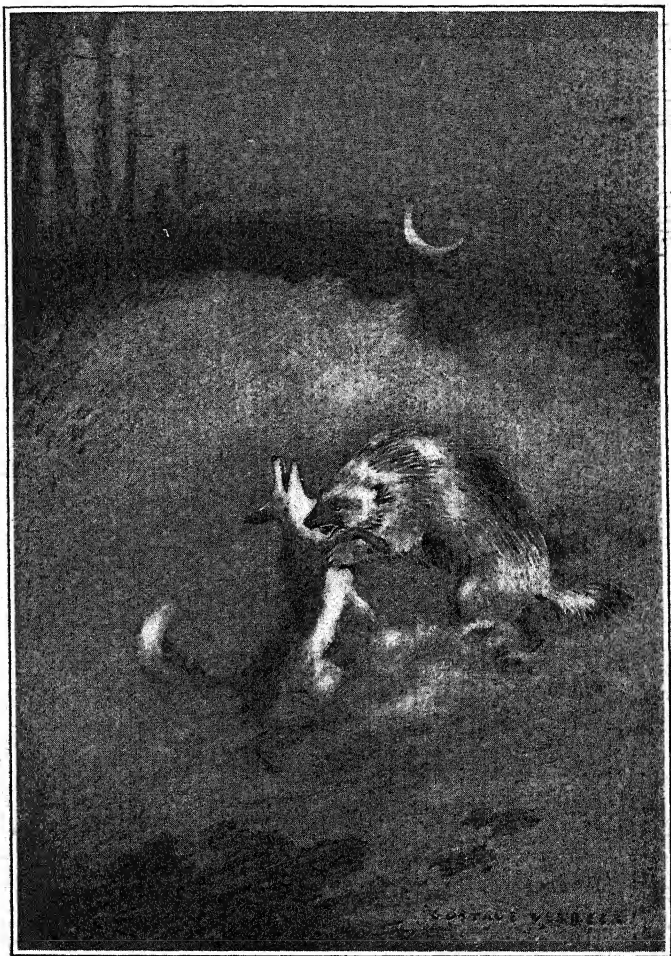
The fox looked at it quizzically for a few minutes with his head on one side, and his tail waving gently to and fro. He knew perfectly

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well that Graball was trying to get at his wife and little ones, and, frightened and shy as he was of Gluttons, he grew daring now, especially when he concluded that this was the lame Glutton he had met only a short time before. So, after another moment's hesitation, he suddenly caught hold of that hateful tail with his sharp teeth, and bit it again and again with all his might.

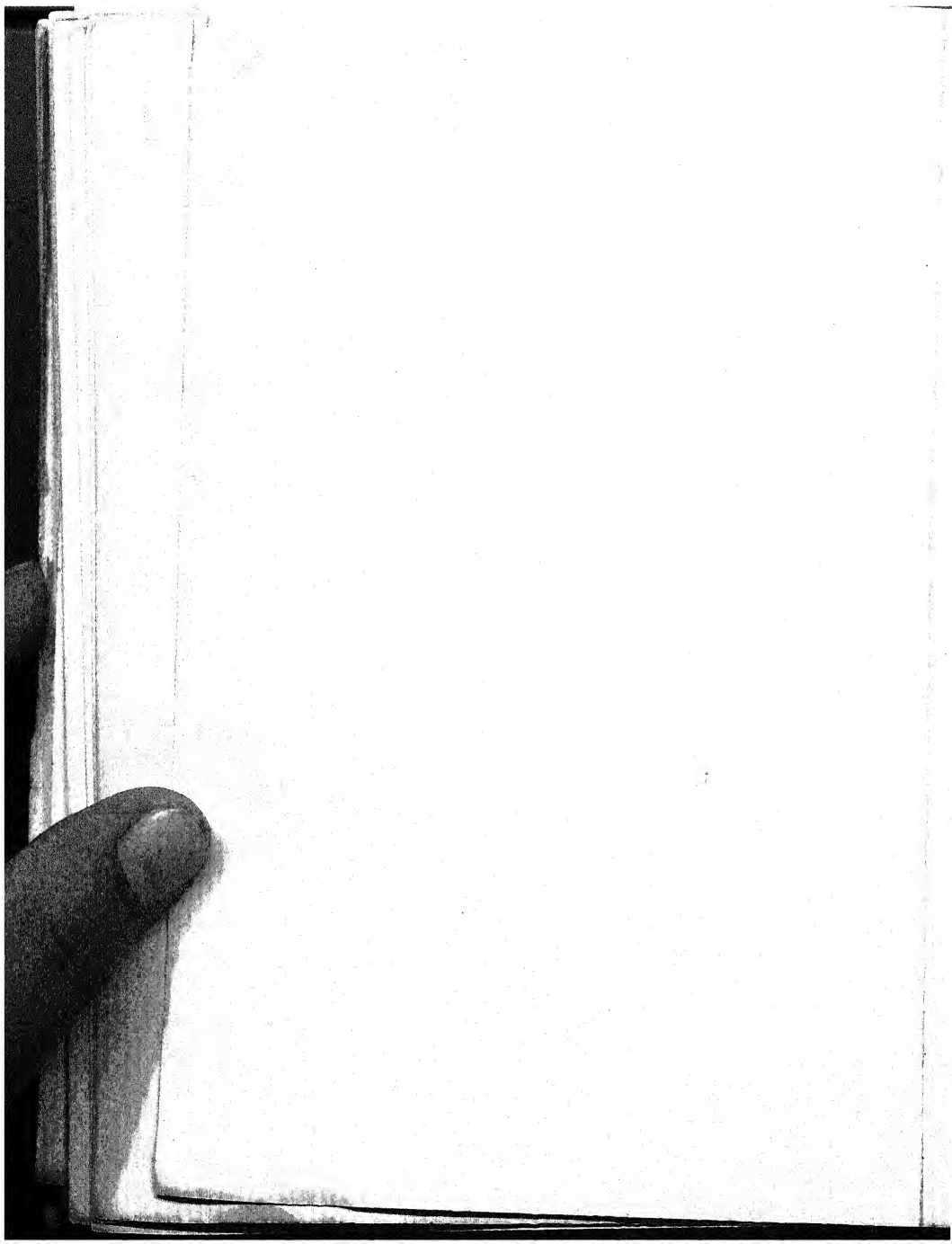
Graball was frightened and astonished, and growled with rage and pain, but the fox held on and gave sharp, snapping bites at that tail until he grew too excited to notice that Graball was coming out backwards. Another moment and the tables were turned.

There was a shower of loose earth—a vicious, angry growl—and, before the fox knew where he was, Graball had him by the throat, and, fight and struggle as he would and did, the fox was no match for a Glutton. Graball was mad to think that a fox should dare to bite him, and by the tail, too, and this, added to his strength, caused him to make very short work of the fox. In a very



*Wild Creatures Afield*

"GRABALL HAD HIM BY THE THROAT"



## THE GLUTTON

little while the fox lay dead and limp on the ground, and Graball then promptly proceeded to eat him, and a very delicious meal he made.

He would probably have eaten the fox's wife and little cubs, too, but, as he never took more trouble than he could help, he remembered the Indian trapper's baits, and decided to make another visit to the traps.

Now, ever since Graball had been cut in the hut, the Indian had never once lost his bait. So, when one night he found that all the traps had been sprung again,\* and all the bait stolen, he thought it was some other Glutton who had found out his trapping-place. He knew it was a Glutton by the clever way in which the traps had been sprung, and various other signs, especially the unpleasant odor which Graball had left behind him, and which always kept all other

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\* The Glutton is more clever and sly at springing traps than even a fox. In some incomprehensible manner, he will not only spring a lightly-set trap without harm to himself, but steal the bait and walk off with it.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

animals away from the spot; and, as he had a grudge against Gluttons, he was determined to catch him.

Fortunately, it had been snowing heavily, and the Indian, carefully baiting one of his best and strongest traps, buried it so deeply in the snow that one would have thought no animal would ever have been able to find out its whereabouts.

But Graball found it out. His wonderfully keen nose soon discovered that some fresh meat was hidden in the snow, and, feeling sure that it had been put there so that he should not get it, he determined to dig it out no matter how long it took him, or how much trouble it was.

So, with angry growls, he set to work, using his strong paws and sharp claws with all his might; and, although the trap and bait had been buried nearly six feet deep, he soon got at them, and with a savage noise, something between a growl and a cough, he promptly caught hold of the meat. But he had made a mistake this time. For as he seized it, something tight and cold



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closed round his neck, and, with his teeth still tightly fastened in the meat, Graball was choked, and in a very few minutes was quite dead.

And the Indian was so delighted when he found him, that he gave a "whoop!" that frightened all the animals, birds, and insects in the neighborhood. For, as he turned him over, he noticed the scar where the ax had cut him, and then knew that it was his old enemy who had stolen his bait, and worried and baffled him for such a long time.

And so he kept his skin and dressed it, and seemed to find a supreme satisfaction in treading on it every time he entered his hut, the very hut where Graball had thought himself so clever in stealing and hiding the Indian's things.

And although he never, from that day to this, found any of the things which Graball stole and hid so cunningly and deeply in the ground, the Indian did not mind a bit. He easily got more blankets and pots and pans, but he had no more bait stolen, and no more traps sprung,

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and so did a good and thriving trade and was as happy and cheerful as it is possible for an Indian to be.

THE BROWN PELICAN



## THE BROWN PELICAN

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IN a small island in the Indian River, in Florida, called Pelican Island, three little baby Pelicans one day kicked off the remains of their shell houses, and displayed their little naked, black bodies to the full glare of daylight.

They were very ugly and very feeble, but they opened their wide, big mouths and asked as plainly as they could for something to eat, for they were very hungry indeed. The old Mother Pelican looked at them proudly, for these were the first babies she had ever had, and she considered that they were finer and stronger than any she had ever seen before. But she knew what they wanted, so, lifting her big, brownish-gray body from the nest, she flew off, joining a flock of other Pelicans who were going to feed.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

Away they flew, one bird behind the other, flapping their wings several times all together, then sailing smoothly along for a little while, with their necks bent back over their bodies, and then flapping their wings together again as though at a given signal. So they went on until they reached the feeding-ground, and then they hovered about on the watch for fish.

The Mother Pelican kept a sharper lookout than usual, for she had four mouths to feed now instead of one. In a few moments her sharp eyes saw some nice little fish near the top of the water, and, swooping down in an instant, she skimmed along the surface with her under bill formed into a beautiful scoop, and, having put the fish into her throat for safety, she flew back to her young ones again.

And, oh! what excitement there was! The little black bodies looked all mouths for a moment, but they soon took the fish from their mother's pouch,\* and when they had had a good

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\*There is an old fable which states that the Pelican feeds

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feed, thy settled themselves down for a nice sleep under their mother's wings. They were all very good little birds, but the biggest of them, Brownie, was too restless for a nest built in a mangrove tree, and made the others uncomfortable. But he was not only careless, he was clumsy; his webbed feet, with their turned-in toes, always seemed to be tumbling over one another, and one day, when he was wobbling round as usual, he lost his balance and fell out of the nest.

Their black bodies were covered with a white down by this time, and their wing-feathers were just beginning to grow, but, alas! these wing-feathers had not grown big enough to be of any use in flying yet, and so down and down poor little Brownie went, only stopping at the bottom, and then lying quite still.

His two brothers, Quinks and Quirks, stretched their necks out of the nest, and then looked at

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her offspring from the blood of her own breast, and it is, no doubt, from this action that it originated.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

one another in a frightened, bewildered manner. They would have liked to go and fetch him, but at this moment their mother returned from fishing, and their brother and everything else was forgotten in their eagerness to have something to eat, for Pelicans are always hungry and have enormous appetites.

Now, Quirks had one great failing; he was very greedy, and although he was very fond of his brothers, he always did his very utmost to get the best and biggest fish for himself. But Quinks was specially hungry just then, too, and so, as the Mother Pelican settled on the nest, they both stood up, stretched to their full height, their necks craned out, mouths ready, creamy little toes turned well in, and their funny little stubby wings stretched to their fullest extent.

With a little gulp their mother brought the fish from her throat to her pouch in her under bill, and then how the little ones scrambled and fought, and what a lot they ate! There was plenty for three, but they managed it all between



## THE BROWN PELICAN

them, and Quinks, knowing Quirks' greediness, determined this time to have a good feed himself. But he was too eager, for, while he was fishing in his mother's pouch, he found an unusually big fish which only a grown-up Pelican could swallow, and so eager was he to get it down before Quirks could get it, that it stuck in his throat and choked him.

In vain he struggled and gasped, while his mother and brother looked on, powerless to help him. In a few moments his little white body, with its creamy legs and feet, and curious gray bill wide open with part of the fish hanging out, was lying as limp and helpless in the nest as his brother's was below.

His mother was puzzled and disturbed for awhile, and looked at him curiously, while Quirks couldn't understand why Quinks wouldn't answer when he was spoken to, but they couldn't have a dead body in the nest, so after awhile, after gravely considering the situation with their heads on one side, they kicked him out, and then Quirks had it all to himself.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

And this was partly the reason Quirks grew to be such an exceptionally large and strong bird. His mother always brought enough fish for three, but Quirks always managed the whole lot himself, and, although at times it made his crop very full and gave him an uncomfortable feeling, he flourished on it, and, by the time his mother taught him to fly, he was stronger than she was and quite as big.

But they had some fine times together. They went into water deep enough to swim in, but not so deep that they could not touch the bottom when swimming with their heads below the surface of the water. One day they joined all the other Pelicans on a grand fishing expedition.

They had found a beautiful piece of water, not too deep, and not too shallow. Each bird stationed himself below the water about a yard away from his neighbor, in the form of a horseshoe. They started in this way from one bank, and fished across in a regular and systematic manner to the bank on the opposite side, and as the poor fish had very little chance to

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escape when the Pelicans fished in this way, the birds had fine sport and a splendid feed.

By the time they arrived on the other side Quirks had gorged himself to such an extent that he could scarcely waddle up the bank with the others. But he did it somehow, and then he pretended to be quite grown-up and did everything he saw the other Pelicans do. He preened and dressed his feathers, opened his huge mouth, every now and then, which seemed to be the proper thing to do after such a big feed, squatted down on his legs and shut his eyes sleepily until his big meal had digested a little, and finally settled himself down comfortably and had a most delicious sleep with the others.

When he woke up, he found all the other Pelicans wide awake, and preening themselves again. So he rose slowly and did as they did. When all their feathers had been thoroughly dried, dressed, and attended to, the Pelicans opened their mouths again, exercised their wings and legs, and then began to look about.

Then, as with one accord, the Pelicans moved

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down to the water once more, only this time, instead of forming a horse shoe, they went in a straight line, and they got nearly as many fish in this way as in the other.

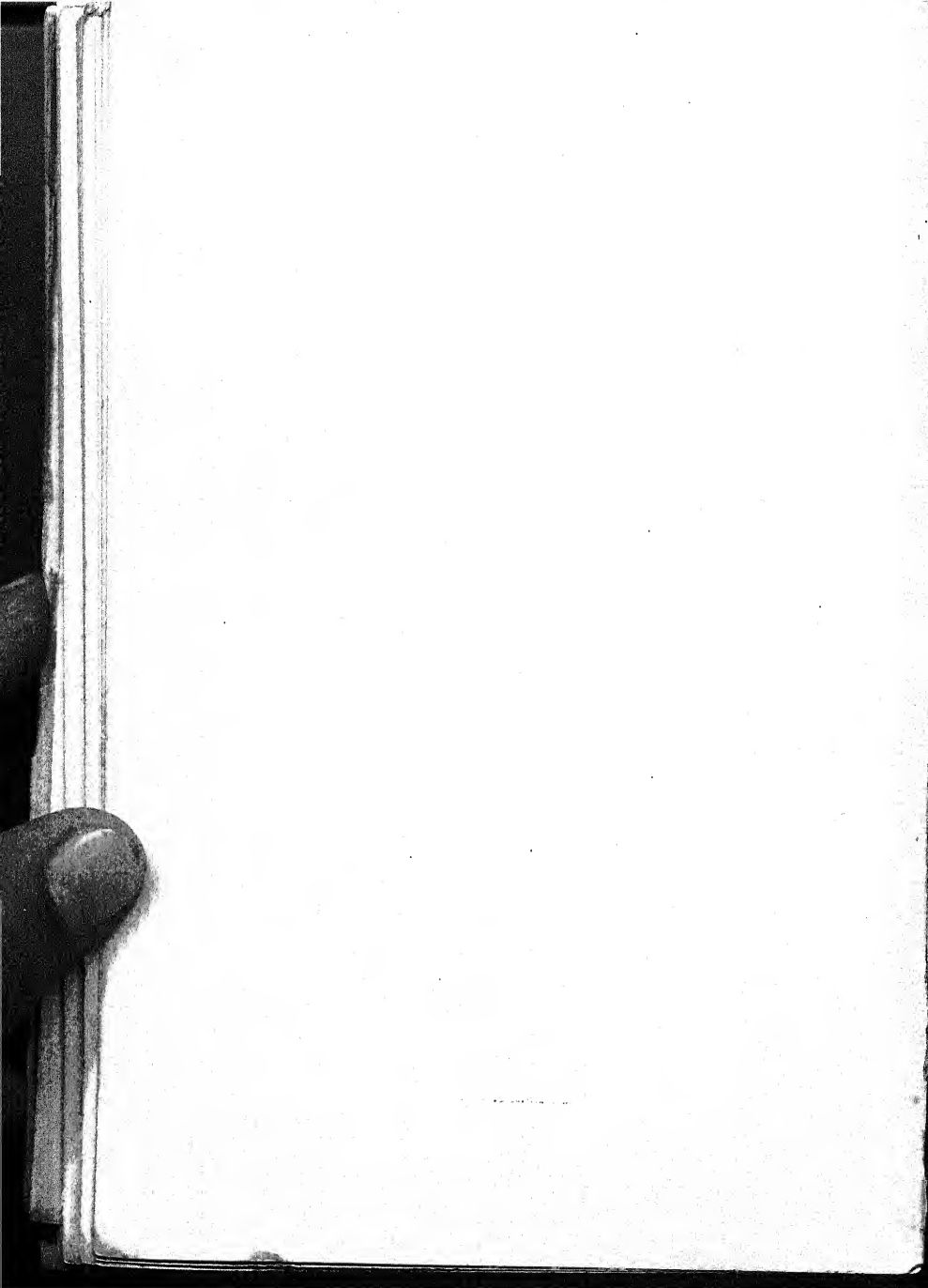
By the time Quirks had been fishing for some time in this way he began to feel quite grown-up, although he did eat a crawfish one day just as an experiment. It did not hurt him, but it was uncomfortable, and for the future he left them alone.

So it was not much wonder that Quirks grew to be such a strong and healthy bird. Certainly he was not particularly handsome, but in spite of his bulk and clumsy form, he was wonderfully active when flying, and was soon able to fly as fast as the oldest and strongest Pelican in the flock. He was able to keep up with the strongest, too, and would fly for miles without showing the least sign of fatigue.

When he was full-grown he was the leader of one of the finest flocks in Florida, and his big brown body, with its strong muscular wings, would be seen leading the way to the best feed-

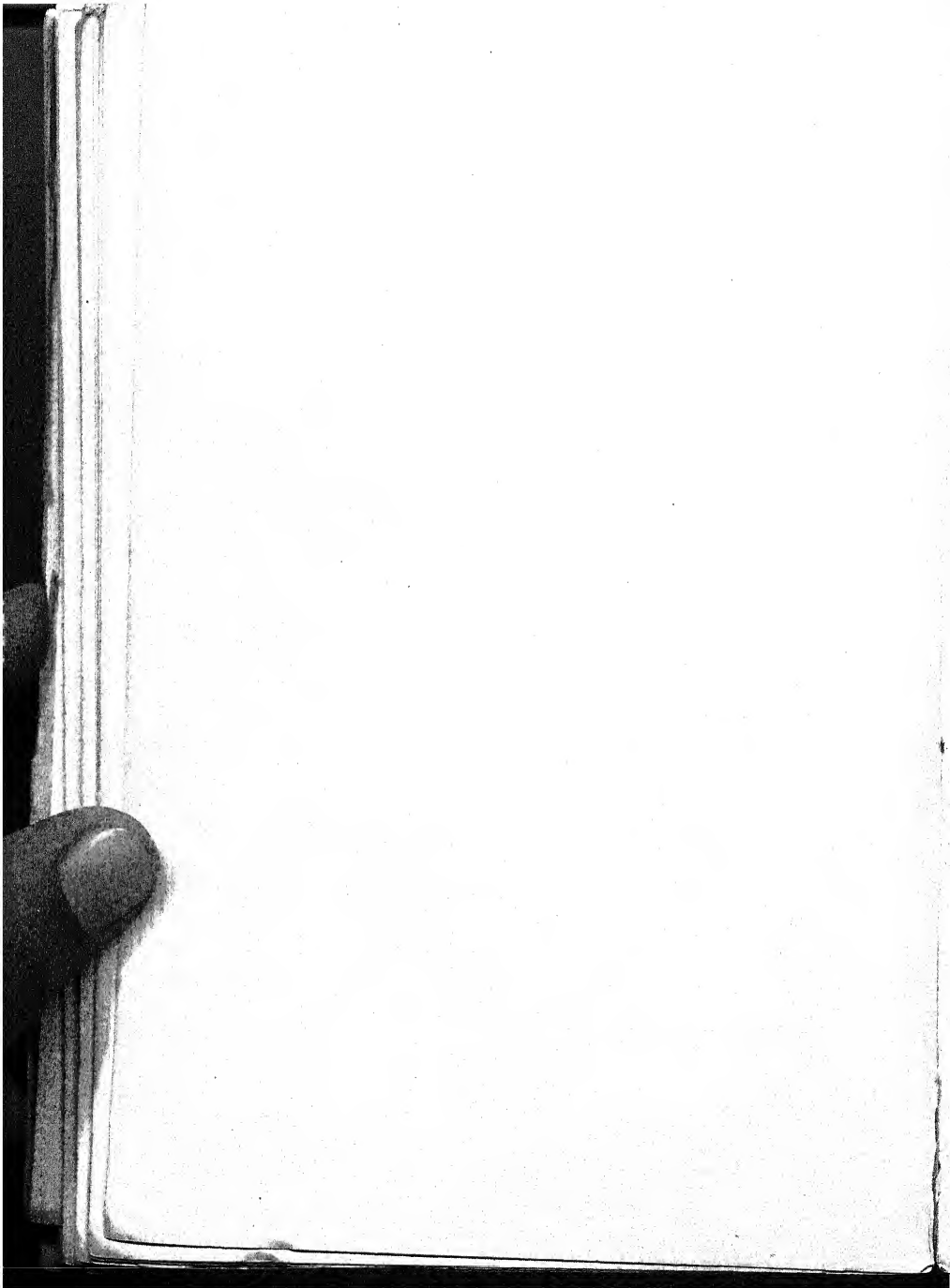
## THE BROWN PELICAN

ing-places, all the other Pelicans flying one behind the other, and forming a diagonal line which looked just like a string of birds hung in the air.



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## THE PUMA





## THE PUMA

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T was a glorious day for a romp—bright and sunny; rather too hot for some of the inhabitants of the forest, who did their best to forget the heat by sleeping in the shade, but with just enough gentle breeze to make the luxuriant leaves and foliage move and rustle a little in the South American jungle, which was delightful in many ways.

This is what Patterfoot, the Puma, thought, as he lay on his tawny back, with the whitish underpart of his body, his four soft, velvety-looking feet, and his furry nose, with its bright, keen eyes, black spotted nose, and flesh-colored nostrils, turned up toward the trees. The day seemed to have been made for him, and he enjoyed himself thoroughly.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

What could be more delightful than to lie there in the soft, comfortable undergrowth, waving his tail expectantly, and wait until the breeze made the leaves just over his head quiver and shimmer in the sunshine? The sun was a little bright, even for him, but, as the leaves moved, out would go first one soft paw and then the other, and, with delicate little pats, he would touch the leaves tenderly, as though with a caress, and then with a sudden, light bound pretend to be startled and jump away, only to lie down again with a soft guttural purr, and begin it all over again.

Patterfoot was a very kitten at heart, playful and gentle, and full of mischief as he could be, but just as happy as the day was bright and long. He was not quite grown-up yet, and could even remember his mother a little. She was a dignified Puma, who, although she had occasionally allowed herself to play with her little one, always did it in a solemn manner, as though anxious to show him that she only did it for his sake. She had brought him up very well, and

## THE PUMA

then, getting a little tired of the arduous duties of motherhood, had finally left him to take care of himself.

And Patterfoot had done it extremely well up to this time. He had a happy nature, but when it was necessary he could be as fierce and dangerous as any other Puma in the whole of South America. If he fancied any particular kind of food, he took care to get that food no matter how much it cost him, or what danger he had to face to get it.

He was particularly fond of horse-flesh, and had wrought such terrible havoc among the young colts in a neighboring corral, that the owners had long ago vowed to kill him. But this was easier said than done. Patterfoot, daring and fearless as he was, did not believe in running unnecessary risks, and when he thought there was any special danger in one part, he generally considered that it would be wiser to go to another part of the country for the time being, or that a change of diet would be good for him.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

And up to this day, when he lay playing with the leaves, his enemies had never even been able to catch so much as a glimpse of him, although they knew perfectly well that it was a Puma who was doing all the mischief, and that it lived quite close by in one of the forests.

But on this particular day, when Patterfoot was having such a good time, a man crept softly through the bushes, and, carefully parting the thick growth, peered cautiously through and stood looking at the lithe, tawny body of the Puma, and wondering whether he would be able to fetch his gun. The difficulty would be to find the same spot again, for all parts of the forest were much alike, and in all probability the Puma would have gone by the time he returned. So, creeping quietly off, he left Patterfoot still playing with the leaves and unconscious that an enemy had even been near him.

Now the man who had seen the Puma was the owner of the corral where Patterfoot had made such terrible havoc among the colts, and he was determined to get him in some way

## THE PUMA

or another, and after this Patterfoot had some very narrow escapes. He was nearly caught in a trap one night, wounded and nearly killed by a shot another time, and actually set upon by dogs quite unexpectedly one day when he was lazily stretching himself.

Like all Pumas, Patterfoot hated dogs of all kinds. He was gentle and good-natured as a rule, and never attempted to hurt a human being on any consideration,\* but the very sight of a dog nearly drove him mad. From a soft, gentle-looking creature he would suddenly become a furious, savage animal. His eyes would flash and gleam like balls of fire, his hair bristle and stand erect, while the wild paroxysm of rage into which he would instantly fly would make his whole body tremble and quiver from head to foot. His soft, tender-looking mouth would suddenly reveal cruel teeth with the lips drawn tightly back over them, and from his open

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\*According to some of the best authorities, the South American Puma will never attack or molest men, women, or children, even when asleep.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

mouth would issue forth angry snarls and heavy, hoarse breaths, while now and again he would spit in the most vicious manner, and behave so savagely and outrageously that it was almost impossible to realize that he could be the same harmless-looking creature of only a few minutes before.

So that, when the dogs, who had seen the quiet, gentle-looking cat lying so calmly half asleep, were suddenly confronted by a wild-eyed, savage creature, half mad with uncontrollable passion, they suddenly turned with howls of terror and tails down, and made the best of their way home again. But a great many of them did not reach home. For, with light, wonderfully quick springs, Patterfoot struck one after another of them, knocking some of them head over heels, and dislocating the necks of a few more with a pat from his soft-looking paws.

And the only effects he received himself from this terrible onslaught were just a few scratches, which he licked at his leisure, with gleaming eyes and savage growls. For he could not even

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think of a dog without getting angry. He hated them furiously, one and all, and would have liked to have killed a few more.

But after this the owner of the corral kept quiet. He had gone to a great deal of expense, had lost some of his most valuable dogs, and was no nearer catching or killing the Puma than before. So he decided to let things rest for a time, and so induce the Puma to go in and out of the corral again, and then watch his opportunity.

But Patterfoot was just as deep and crafty as the corral owner. He knew perfectly well in some curious instinctive manner that there was danger in the corral at that time, and so he kept away from it and contented himself with other food for the time being.

He lay in wait for deer, hiding his long, lithe, supple body in the thick grasses and undergrowth, and then, when the gentle creatures went down at dusk to drink, glancing timidly in all directions with their beautiful eyes, he would spring on them so suddenly that very often they

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would die even before reaching the ground.\* He was extremely fastidious about deer-flesh, and, as he only ate the breasts, he was obliged to kill a great many.

But he did not mind that, for to this wild creature of the woods it was one of the most natural things to do. It was his one way of obtaining fresh food and the only way, and very often he killed a great many more than he wanted, simply for the pleasure of capture and the exercise.

After a time he grew tired of deer-flesh, and then he had another change of diet. He liked a nice young wild turkey for a change, and enjoyed catching him. Some of the turkeys were extremely stupid, and, even when Patterfoot would give them a little warning by rustling the branches or bushes, they would stop just where they were, stretch their necks to their fullest extent, and gobble at the top of their voices.

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\*Pumas occasionally dislocate the neck of an animal at one blow.—AUTHOR.



## THE PUMA

This would happen several times, and then Patterfoot would get tired, and just when the turkeys thought it was a false alarm and there was nothing to worry about, he would gather himself together, his eyes would gleam, his pink nostrils open and shut once or twice, and then there would be a sudden leap, a hoarse cry from one of the birds, terrible screams and gobblings from the others as they flew wildly in all directions, and then Patterfoot would be on the ground, his ears laid well back, his cruel eyes half closed, and the tense muscles in his forelegs showing the powerful and tenacious grip he had on the turkey.

And sometimes after this he would play with the turkey very much in the same way in which a cat plays with a mouse—for he was nothing but a big cat after all—and, pretending to let it go, suddenly spring on it again with a growl, and this would go on until the bird was dead, and then Patterfoot would proceed to eat it quietly and comfortably.

There was only one drawback to a turkey and

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

that was its feathers. Patterfoot did not like feathers, and yet, like the cat, he was very fond of creatures on which the feathers grew; so he made the best of it, and, by sniffing a great deal and shaking his head, managed to get rid of a great many of them.

But there were other things besides turkeys and deer. There were sheep, of which Patterfoot was extremely fond. Indeed, he would often leave calves and colts to get a nice bit of mutton for supper. But to get sheep he had to go to the same place where the corral was, and so it happened that one evening when he was tired of deer and turkeys he made up his mind to try and get a nice young sheep again.

He was cunning enough to know that the danger was less now that he had not been seen for so long, but he went to work very cautiously, and, one evening when the twilight was creeping over the earth, Patterfoot crept noiselessly and stealthily towards the corral, scarcely moving a twig or branch on his way, and slid into one

## THE PUMA

of the sheep-pens so silently that even the sheep, who generally were very quick in knowing the nearness of a Puma, did not realize his presence for a few seconds.

But they very soon found it out. And then the poor things, half wild with terror, bleated painfully, tore round and round the pens and struggled frantically to get away. As a rule, Patterfoot did not give them time to struggle much; for he made quick work of killing them, but on this occasion something else attracted his attention, and this something was a little boy who was amusing himself by patting the sheep and lambs, and talking to them in his baby fashion.

He was a fine little fellow about five years old, and was the son of the owner of the corral. As the sheep suddenly scuttled about, he looked round to see what had caused the disturbance, and saw what he thought was a beautiful big cat. Utterly fearless, he left the sheep and, going over to the Puma, put his small hand on the handsome head and patted it caressingly, talking

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

to him in the same way in which he had been talking to the sheep.

And, in some strange way, Patterfoot forgot the sheep and his supper, and purred and rubbed himself against the child with every evidence of delight.

Indeed, it would have been difficult to tell which was the most pleased, the child or the Puma. So fearless, in his ignorance, was the boy, that he put his arms round the Puma's neck and kissed him, calling him his "dear Pussy," his "nice Pussy," and so forth, and Patterfoot appeared to quite appreciate the nice things that were said to him, and purred with all his might.

And when the owner of the corral appeared upon the scene, gun in hand, he saw, to his horror, a fine nearly full-grown Puma, rolling over and over on the ground, patting the air playfully with his paws, while his little son stood by, laughing gayly, and occasionally patting the Puma in return.

For a few seconds the poor father grew sick

## THE PUMA

and giddy with fear. He dared not shoot; he was quite as likely to kill his little son as the Puma. To go away might be to leave the child to a terrible fate; to stay where he was might frighten the Puma and cause him to suddenly kill the child.

But, after a few minutes' consideration, the owner decided to slip quietly off and get a long rope or lasso and try to catch the Puma in that way. Fortunately, Patterfoot and the boy were so taken up with their own pleasure that they did not notice either the coming or going of the man, and so, as he moved cautiously off, the patting game went on as before.

Half blind with fear and terrible forebodings of what might happen to his little son during his absence, the poor man stumbled back to his house, and, getting some of his men to follow him at a little distance, crept cautiously back to the sheep-pen again with the lasso coiled ready in his hand.

It was with intense thankfulness that he saw the two strange companions were still playing.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

But when he came to try to put his plan in effect he found it was more difficult than he had imagined. There seemed to be no way of catching the Puma without also catching the child, which would be fatal. But presently, for some reason or other, Patterfoot sprang lightly some distance away, and then there was a grand opportunity.

Instantly, for there was no time to be lost, the coil of rope whizzed through the air, and the next moment Patterfoot, to his intense surprise, was unable to move. The rope had been well aimed, and as it slid over the Puma's slim, lithe body, it suddenly tightened in such a manner that his forelegs were bound tightly to his body. He made a frantic resistance for a few seconds and then lay quite still, looking wonderingly at his captor, and then at the child, who had run up.

As soon as the other men had come up and helped to make the Puma fast, the father caught up his child and kissed him hungrily, while poor Patterfoot looked on meekly.

Presently the men proceeded to tie him to a

## THE PUMA

tree in order to shoot him. Then suddenly, without the least warning, Patterfoot gave one of his awful screams—so shrill, weird, and piercing, that the very hearts of the men stood still. The only one who seemed to realize his feelings was the little boy, who rushed away from his father, and, running towards the Puma with outstretched arms, begged the men not to hurt his "dear Pussy," his "nice, pretty Pussy!"

And, in some curious way, Patterfoot seemed quite to understand what he was saying, for he began to shiver and tremble all over and whined in the most pitiful manner. As the child went on begging the men not to hurt it, Patterfoot's eyes filled with tears,\* and he looked so meekly pathetic that, what with the cries and entreaties of his little son, and the Puma's patient, unresisting attitude, the owner of the corral had not the heart to hurt him, and ordered the men to

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\*An actual fact, vouched for by one of the highest authorities.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

wait until he had taken the child to the house, and then to let the Puma go.

And although the men argued and reasoned at the folly of it, the corral-owner would not give in, and so Patterfoot's life was saved, and he was allowed to go free. After this he was allowed to go where he pleased without being molested, for the owner would not have him touched or harmed in any way, but he was extremely careful to keep his little son out of the way.

And there came a day when he was indeed thankful that he had given the Puma his life.

Many months afterwards, when the incident was half forgotten, the little boy was on the lawn just outside the house, when suddenly a large, stealthy animal crept through the shrubs surrounding the lawn, and with a light spring bounded forward and rubbed his head caressingly against the child.

With a little cry of joy, the boy recognized his "dear Pussy," and they were soon as happy as when they first met in the sheeep-pen. But this time Patterfoot did all he could to induce



## THE PUMA

the child to follow him. He would bound forward and then look back, and the boy, in his pleasure at finding his friend again, forgot his promise not to go away, and little by little wandered off with the Puma into the woods.

What a fine time they had! Patterfoot scampering along, purring loudly, rolling over and over, springing up, bounding off, rolling over again, and then running back to rub himself against the child and purr more loudly than ever; and the child, delighted with it all, running along on his sturdy limbs, laughing, chatting, and talking to his "dear Pussy" about everything he could think of.

And in the midst of all this there suddenly appeared another long, lithe body, with a head like Patterfoot's in some respects, but with cruel, relentless eyes, and a snarling, hissing mouth. His body was covered with dark, velvety spots in the form of rosettes, and he had the same sort of velvety-looking paws that Patterfoot had, but the sharp claws were being drawn in and out as though in anticipation of a coming battle.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

And the battle came quicker than the newcomer expected, for, at the first glimpse of the Jaguar, Patterfoot's gentleness disappeared, and, with a savage growl, so throaty and hoarse that it was difficult to believe that Patterfoot had uttered it, the Puma sprang, and a most terrible fight followed. There was no doubt that Patterfoot was thinking of protecting his little friend,\* for he did his best to keep the Jaguar away from him, and grew more savage and wild each time the Jaguar tried to get nearer to the boy.

All Patterfoot's relations had always been called cowards, and he himself had been called so when he had trembled and cried the day they were going to kill him. But there was no cowardice about him now, and he did what very few wild animals cared to do—dare, defy, and fight a Jaguar. He would not give in, either, and it was not until he had been terribly torn and

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\*Pumas have been known to protect children in this way occasionally.—AUTHOR.

## THE PUMA

wounded, and the Jaguar was dying, that he once let go his hold.

And then he found that his little friend had disappeared. Poor little fellow, frightened and bewildered at the terrible battle between the animals, he had turned back again, and, being quite close to his home, had been fortunate enough to go in the right direction, and so got back safely. His story was not credited until the men found the body of a dead Jaguar and saw a Puma overhead washing his wounds, and looking calmly down at them.

But they did not hurt him, and he seemed quite to understand that they would not do so, for he did not attempt to go away, neither did he cry or whimper as before. And this episode was such a lesson to the child that for a long time nothing would induce him to go anywhere away from the house, although he was always on the lookout for his "dear Pussy."

And Patterfoot did not forget him. He often peeped at him from a distance and looked at him proudly, and although in most cases the

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

child did not see him, the Puma would put out his paw playfully, as though begging that they might have a nice little game as they used to. But the child was too carefully guarded from that time for there to be any more chances of those little games, and meanwhile Patterfoot consoled himself by visiting the corral regularly, picking out the best and finest young colts, and having a good time generally at the owner's expense.

And all the owner could be induced to do towards the protection of his cattle was to keep them as well protected in the corrals and pens as possible, and to shut up all the young things he possibly could. But he gave strict orders that no Puma was ever to be killed on any account, or even hurt, for he could not forget that a Puma had saved the life of his little son.

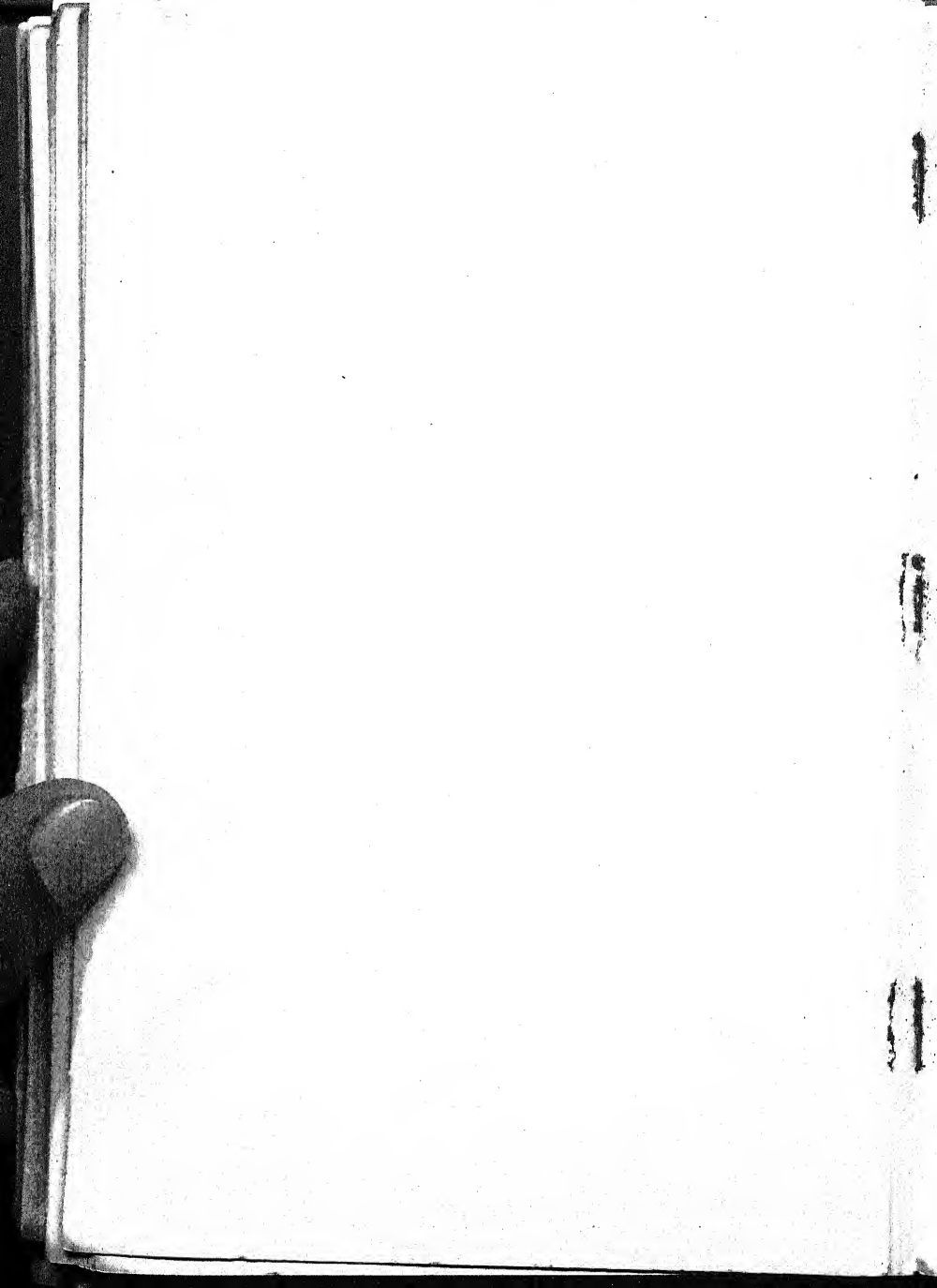
And so, through this, Patterfoot had an extremely nice life of it, and enjoyed himself thoroughly. He was always playful, even when he grew older and had a wife and children to think of. He would go out and kill some fresh

## THE PUMA

food for them, even big, full-grown animals, such as a horse, cow, or Wapiti deer, and be as savage as any other wild beast if danger threatened his beloved ones, but he was always ready for a romp, just as he had been on that first day we met him in the woods, when he was having such a lovely time playing with the leaves all by himself.




THE YAK





## THE YAK

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T had been a bitterly cold day, even for Tibet, and the wind had already changed about a dozen times in a few hours, but Roamer, a handsome young Yak, still lay placidly on the highest and most barren plateau and chewed his cud contentedly.

He had had a good feed early in the morning, and had then wended his way slowly up the hillside, and, having selected one of the bleakest spots he could find, had settled himself down and been there ever since. He had not been grown-up very long, and so took a pride in doing just what he had seen the older Yak do. But he got tired at last, and, rousing himself, shook his head, waved his thick, bushy tail, and stamped one of his short, stumpy legs on the hard ground.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

He looked a fine, well-grown animal as he stood there, silhouetted against the sky. He stood nearly six feet high at the shoulders, and was massively formed, with short stout legs, a long and narrow head with a flat forehead, smooth horns—not quite come to perfection yet—which curled upward and outward, and then curved boldly forward, small ears and muzzle, but no dewlap. His back was not straight because his shoulders were high and formed a curious curve, while the mass of long, thick hair with which his flanks, limbs, and tail were covered gave him quite a distinguished appearance.

Suddenly he scented danger and looked sharply round. But Roamer's sight was not very good, and the next minute, the wind shifting again, he lost the scent, and, thinking he had been mistaken, he prepared to descend the hill and try to find his three companions. This was the first time he had ever spent a day alone, as these four young Yak generally went about together, but the others had gone wandering off

## THE YAK

somewhere—a well-known habit of the Yak family—and Roamer had not troubled himself much about them.

He had wandering fits himself sometimes. As a rule he was quite content with the coarse pasturage and rough, dry, wiry grass which grew in the high valleys, but occasionally he would feel inclined for something better, and then he would wander down the mountain side to the soft, green banks of streams, where he would find delicious, luxuriant rich grass which he enjoyed thoroughly. Often, when on these wandering expeditions, he would travel miles and miles and forget all about his companions, all about everything, but after a time he would slowly make his way back again, and rejoin the others as though he had never been away at all.

The only time when he ever felt uneasy was when he came across a solitary Yak, and then he was always afraid it might be his great enemy, an old bull—for the old bulls always go about alone.

This old bull had once nearly killed Roamer

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

when he was a little calf. So he was always on the lookout, but at the same time always a little relieved when he found any solitary Yak he met was not his old enemy.

Now, on this particular day, as Roamer made his way down to the valley, he met his enemy, the old bull, coming up, and soon they stood face to face. But only for a few seconds, for the minute Roamer saw the big, cruel horns, and wicked, red eyes of his enemy at such close quarters, he came to the conclusion that he would wait until he was a little older before having a fight; and so, without losing time, he suddenly turned, and, with a wild whisk of head and heels, he tore down the hillside at a full gallop.

So excited—and I am sorry to say, frightened—was he, that he never noticed a something on the ground which moved slowly forward to meet him as he came tearing madly down the hill.

He did not notice anything, so taken up was he with keeping a sharp lookout lest the old bull

## THE YAK

should follow him, until there was a loud, sharp bang—another and another—he felt a curious burning pain in one shoulder, and then, forgetting the bull, forgetting everything but those dreadful things of fire and smoke in front of him, he turned and tore up the hill again, giving gruff, hoarse grunts all the way.

Suddenly Roamer pulled himself up with a sharp jerk, for there, lying directly in his path, was the old bull, bleeding profusely from a wound in his side, his grand old head sunk down, the wicked eyes closed and still, and his breath coming in quick, short gasps.

Now was his time. And he suddenly lowered his massive head and strong horns, and butted the old bull until he was dead.

He waved his tail and made that curious grunting noise again when he saw that his old foe was really vanquished, but he had bought his revenge dearly. For the time being he had forgotten the pain in his shoulder in his excitement at finishing off the old Yak, but at this moment he had another pain and a much sharper

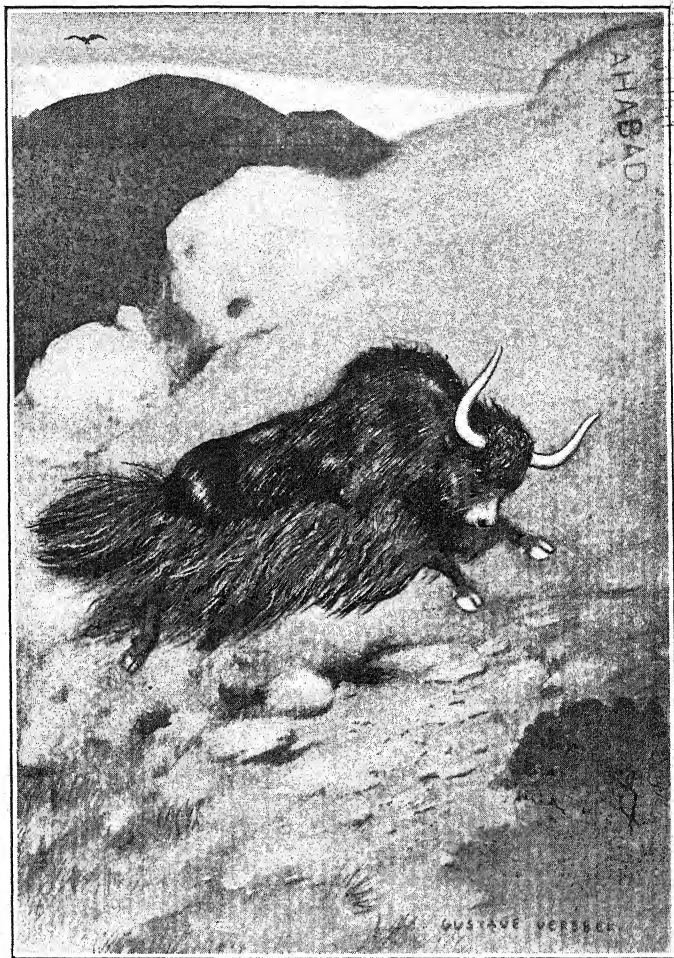
## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

one. It was in his leg this time, and the shock of it sent him down to the ground.

When he tried to get up the pain was so great that he just stayed where he was, and even when three or four men came forward whom he knew to be his deadly enemies, he did not get up, only grunted, and moaned, and butted at them with his horns. They had long ropes in their hands, and, although they were careful not to go too close to him, in some curious way these ropes got wound all around him, and then—oh! the agony and horror of it—he was dragged by two strong horses onto a sledge and jolted all the rest of the way downhill until they came to a rough shed, and into this he was put, strongly and carefully tied up.

But his sufferings were not over yet. The men came and handled his poor broken leg until, in his pain and rage, he nearly wrenched himself free, but at last they left him, and then he found that his leg was tied up with strips of stuff and somehow it felt easier.

But, oh! how miserable he was, and how he



*Wild Creatures Afield*

"HE TURNED AND TORE UP THE HILL AGAIN"





## THE YAK

longed to get out and be free once more. He could hear the other Yak grunting\* in the distance, and was able to tell by the sound of those grunts what they were doing. Once he knew that there was danger about, and that the bulls and cows had put all the calves together, and were forming a circular line of defense outside, and he longed to go and help them. Then there was a sudden sound of many hoofed feet galloping over the ground, and by this he knew that the enemy had appeared and that the Yak were racing away with heads down and heels up.

He thought of all the beautiful hillsides and plateaus—desolate and dreary enough to men, but delightfully cold and enjoyable to him—and of his three young companions, and grieved and fretted so much, that, with this and the pain of his broken leg and wounded shoulder, he grew thin and weak, and utterly wretched. They gave him food that he did not like, too. Very

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\*The Yak neither bellows nor roars; it simply grunts something like a pig (from which it derives its Latin title), which is one of its chief peculiarities.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

little grass, but some horrible corn, which made his skin grow hot and red, and caused him intense suffering.\*

And all this came from his butting and killing the old bull, for had he only gone straight on, the hunters would never have caught him.

But, as the time went on, his leg began to get better, and he slowly grew strong again. And one day, when the men had not been quite so careful as usual to see that he was tied up securely, he wrenched himself free, and, before they realized what was happening, he had broken down their miserable little wooden door, and away he went up to the mountains, scaling steep ascents, for he was as hardy and sure-footed as any goat, climbing rugged peaks, and never resting until he found himself once more on one of his beloved plateaus.

And there he lay down in the bleak, bitter

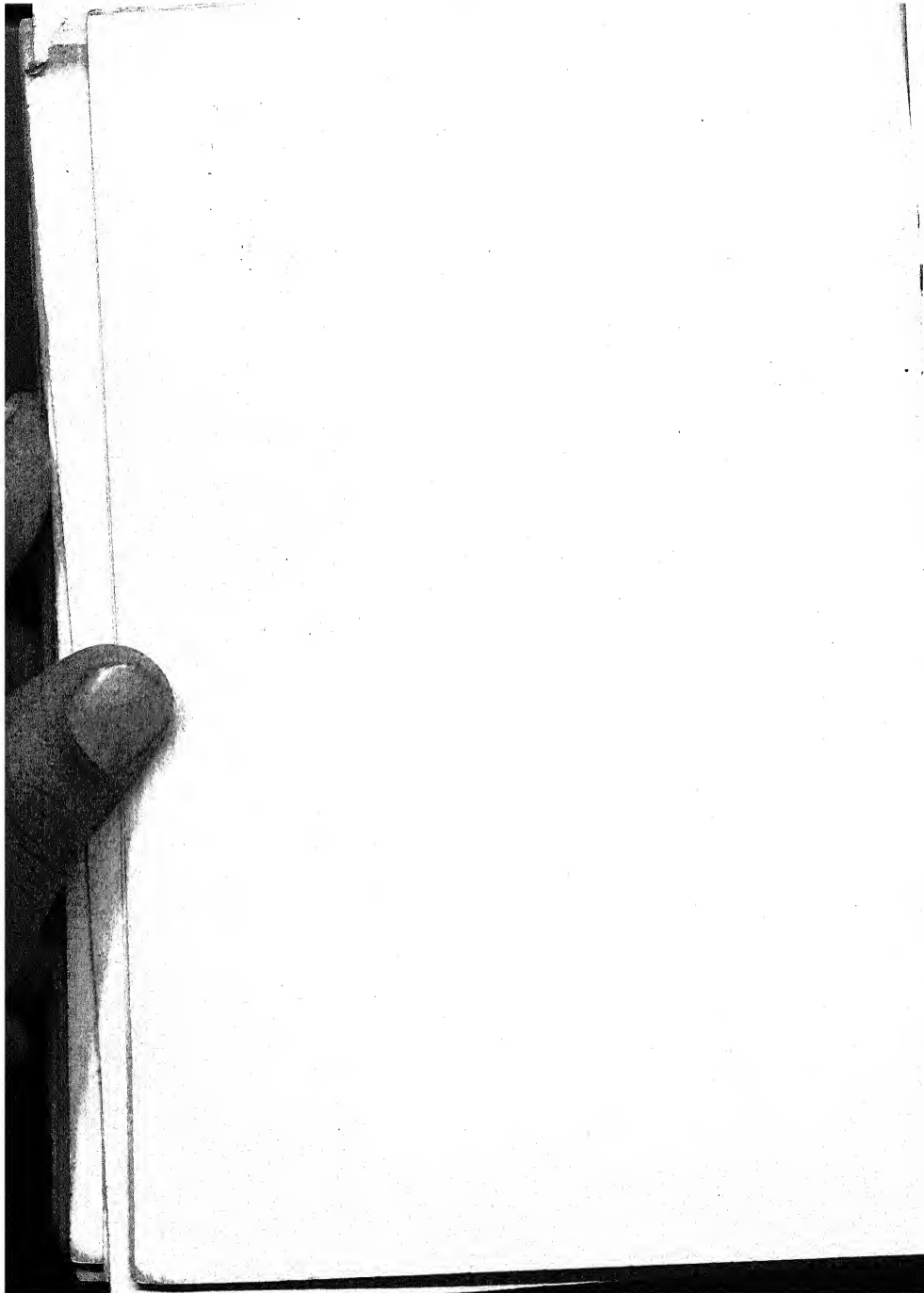
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\*Yak will not eat corn except when extremely hungry. When compelled to eat it, their skin becomes hot and inflamed and causes the animals great suffering. This is their great disadvantage when used as beasts of burden.—AUTHOR.

## THE YAK

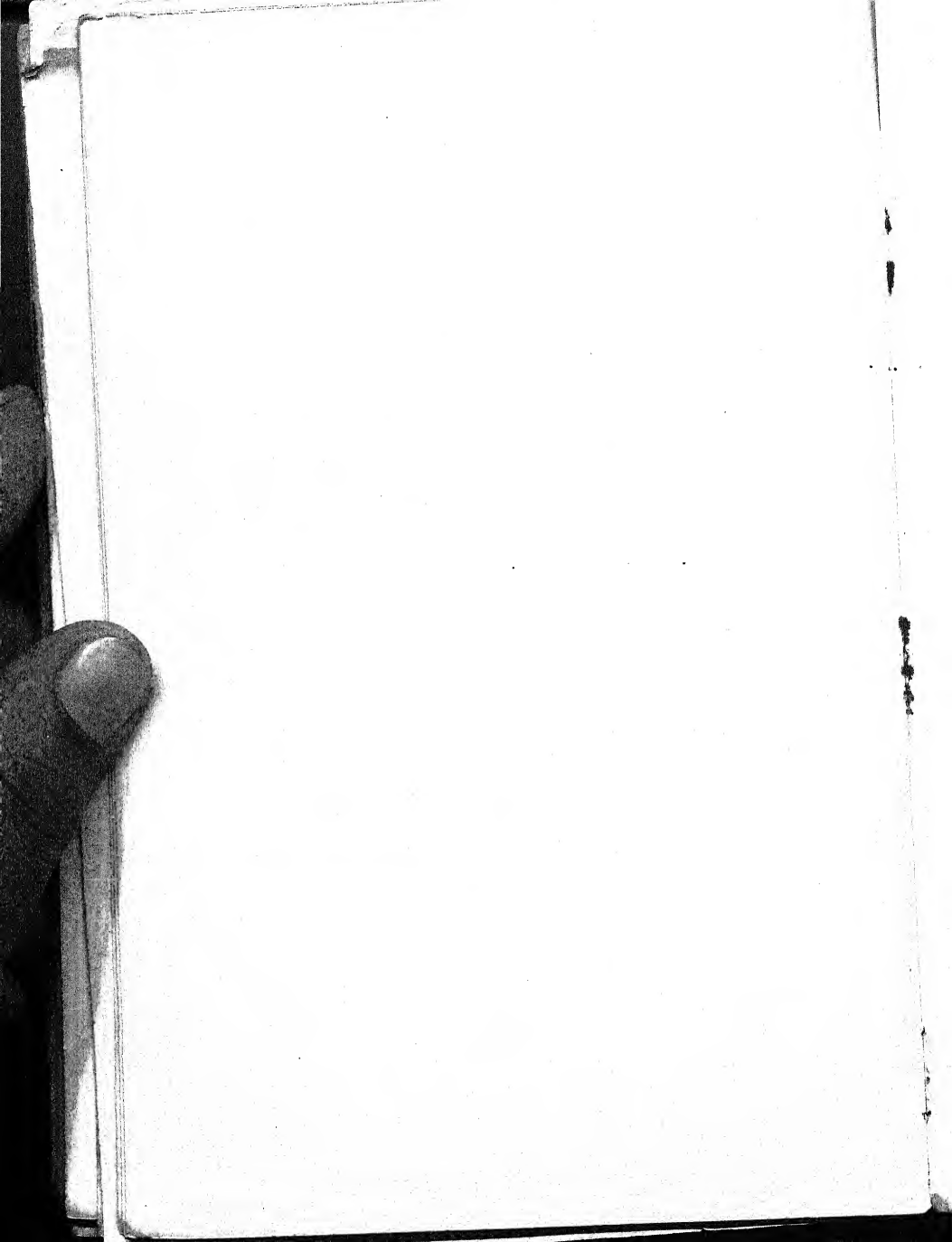
wind, never too bleak or too bitter for a Yak, chewed his cud contentedly and reveled in his freedom again. He had no more special enemies of his own kind from that day, for he was an abnormally big and strong Yak, and was able to hold his own with all comers, who were only too anxious to be friendly with him for the sake of peace and quietness.

And there he is to this day, and although he is getting a little old himself now, he can always be recognized by the scars given him in his youth by the old bull, and those he received from the hunters.



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# THE MARCH HARE



## THE MARCH HARE

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**W**HAT with the rain, the cold, the sleet,  
and the blustering, flustering wind,  
Madden, the Hare, began to feel  
nearly as wild as the weather.

It had been all very well, as long as the weather had kept fairly good, for, having a nice, warm fur coat, Madden did not particularly mind cold, and could always stay in her sheltered burrow, or form, if not inclined to go out. But when the wind rose and began to moan and wail, and then finally whistle and roar, it was too much of a good thing, and it was quite impossible to stay in the burrow while all that racket went on.

So Madden had ventured out, and after she had been buffeted by the wind, drenched by the

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

rain, and half frozen by the biting cold, she began to resent it, and got so excited she scarcely knew what she was doing.

It was just the beginning of March, and she had been thinking how nice it was that the worst of the winter had gone, when suddenly this spell of bad weather had come, and she was angry for many reasons. One reason was that it was so difficult to hear anything in all this noise and bluster, and no matter how far back she laid her big, long ears, she could not tell in the very least whether there was danger near or not, and this made her so timid and nervous that she grew more excited than ever.

This was just the time of year when she needed all her greatest care and precautions, and she had noticed more enemies about lately than ever. There was one old rat whom she hated cordially, for he had been the torment of her life all that winter, and many a time he had sent her back to her home panting and trembling with terror.

Another terrible enemy—the most terrible of all—was a fox; a sly, crafty, cunning fellow,



## THE MARCH HARE

who, with his wicked eyes and bushy tail, was a very nightmare to poor little Madden.

Another foe she dreaded was a huge dog who lived at the farm close by, and who seemed to think it was great fun chasing a hare, and tore after her whenever he had the chance, barking and yelping until Madden's very fur stood on end with fright. But, as a rule, Madden led him a nice dance. The dog had not been trained to catch hares, and could not understand why he lost so much ground just because Madden kept turning, and twisting, and doubling back. He wished she would keep straight on; he might then have a chance of catching her, but this chance the Hare took good care he should not have.

But if this sort of weather was going to keep on, Madden dreaded to think what might happen. For how could she keep a lookout for danger and enemies if she could hear nothing but the moaning and howling of the wind? So it was not much wonder that Madden felt almost as wild as the proverbial March Hare, for she

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

could not rest in her burrow, and she certainly could not rest outside.

After one terrific buffeting by the wind and rain, Madden sat down on her furry little tail, and tried to lick off some of the frozen rain on her paws and whiskers. She was in a little niche out of the wind and was just thinking she would go back to her form for a time, when a gust of wind brought her a whiff of something which sent a thrill of horror through her.

She knew only too well what it was. It was the scent of a fox, but the next moment, owing to the shiftiness of the wind, it had gone again, and the terrible part of it was that Madden did not know in which direction her enemy might be. She laid her ears back and listened with one paw held up, and her poor little nose sniffing and quivering with terror.

Suddenly there was a sound of steps—pitter patter, pitter patter—and away Madden went, where or in what direction she neither knew nor cared. She never stopped until she came to an opening in the earth, and into this she dived

## THE MARCH HARE

with no thought for anything but to get away from that dreadful something behind her.

Down she went into the hole, and was half way in before she realized with an awful pang that she was actually running into the very burrow of the fox himself. There could be no doubt about it, for the smell was overpowering, and there was no other smell like it anywhere.

In vain poor little Madden tried to turn round; it was quite impossible, as, partly from fear and excitement,—for she was now just as mad as she could be for the time being—partly because the burrow was a narrow one, and she was not turning herself the right way. Another moment and she would be killed.

But at this moment a wonderful thing happened. Instead of the fox killing Madden, he seemed to be busy killing something else. A terrific scrimmage was going on, and, after a moment's listening, the Hare became conscious that it was one of her rat enemies that the fox was having a fight with.

In between the howling and roaring of the

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

wind, there were sharp, angry, snarling barks, and curious shrill screams, which were enough to frighten anything far less timid than a Hare. As soon as Madden realized the state of affairs, she backed out and out, until by the cold air on her back she knew she was once more getting out into the open air.

Then with a wild bound, and long, swift leaps she went on and on, not knowing where she was going, or what she was doing. At such a terrific speed was she traveling that she even passed her old enemy the rat, and was so daring and impudent as to kick him in the face with one of her hind feet as she passed.

And the rat was so taken by surprise that he could only look after her, stroke his nose thoughtfully where she had kicked him, and make the best of it.

Meanwhile, Madden, the Hare, tore on, and as the wind got rougher and wilder, so she also got more reckless, and daring and excited. At last in sheer exuberance of spirits and excitement, she careered round and round in a circle, and

## THE MARCH HARE

when she stopped found the fox quite close to her.\* So off she started once more, and never rested, except for short intervals, until at last the wind got tired and sleepy, and sank to rest, not having energy enough left even to make a little breeze.

And then Madden calmed down, lost her wild and reckless feeling, and began instead to have tender thoughts and joyful anticipations. Her fur soon lost the ragged, unkempt look caused by the wind and rain, and when she had licked and dressed it carefully, she began to feel herself again. And quite time, too, for spring would soon be here, and in springtime—

Then she began to look for a nice open space, airy but sheltered, and after a week or two found the very place she wanted. She scratched out a little shallow hollow, collected some nice soft leaves and grasses, and then carefully picked out some tufts of soft fur from her breast,

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\*It is a fact the Hares get in this state in windy, rough weather.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

and lined it throughout to make it warm and comfortable.

A few days more, and then Madden woke up one fine, bright morning to see the sun shining, to hear the birds twittering, and feeling very, very happy. All Nature was looking joyful, and in the comfortable warm nest that Madden had prepared so carefully a short time before, were three pretty furry little creatures with long ears and tiny soft noses, very like Madden herself. Such wee, helpless little mites were they that Madden, in spite of all her motherly care, nearly crushed them once or twice in her nervousness and anxiety to shield them.

She had need to be nervous and anxious, too, for she knew perfectly well that baby leverets were considered great dainties, not only by foxes and rats, but by lots of other things, such as weasels, hawks, owls, and cats. So every now and then the Mother Hare would get out of the nest, lift herself up on her hind feet, and, with her ears laid well back, and her soft nose sniffing the air, would listen for the slightest sound.

## THE MARCH HARE

She was in the very act of listening when she suddenly noticed the old rat coming towards her. In an instant Madden ran straight towards the barn. She had two objects in doing this. One was to get the old rat away from her little ones, and another was that she knew there were eggs in the barn, and also a steel trap which she intended to lead him over if possible.

So away they went, the Hare leading at a wild pace and the rat running his very hardest, for he would certainly get the Hare this time. In darted the Hare through the barn door—so daring a deed had never been done before, not even by a Mother Hare—and made straight for a distant corner, where, as the rat could see, there was a whole nestful of beautiful white eggs. He followed blindly, for he was dreadfully hungry, and the sight of the eggs made his mouth water.

With a couple of bounds Madden reached the corner, but the old rat did not leap as she had done, and suddenly he stopped with a shrill scream of pain, for one of his legs had been

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

caught in that cruel trap, and he was unable to move. At the sound of those repeated screams, several sharp noses, and quick, bright eyes peeped out of odd corners in the barn, and when the owners of those noses and eyes found it was a comrade in distress, they straightway one and all set upon him savagely, and never rested until they had almost torn him to pieces, for this is a custom in rat land.

In the middle of all the confusion, Madden, the Hare, ran out, and that was the last she saw of the rats, for as soon as they had killed the old rat, they set to work and ate the eggs themselves before the old hen had time to get back to the nest.

Madden lost no time in getting back to her little ones after this, and although she was very tired, she laid her long, warm body over them and nourished and nursed them tenderly.

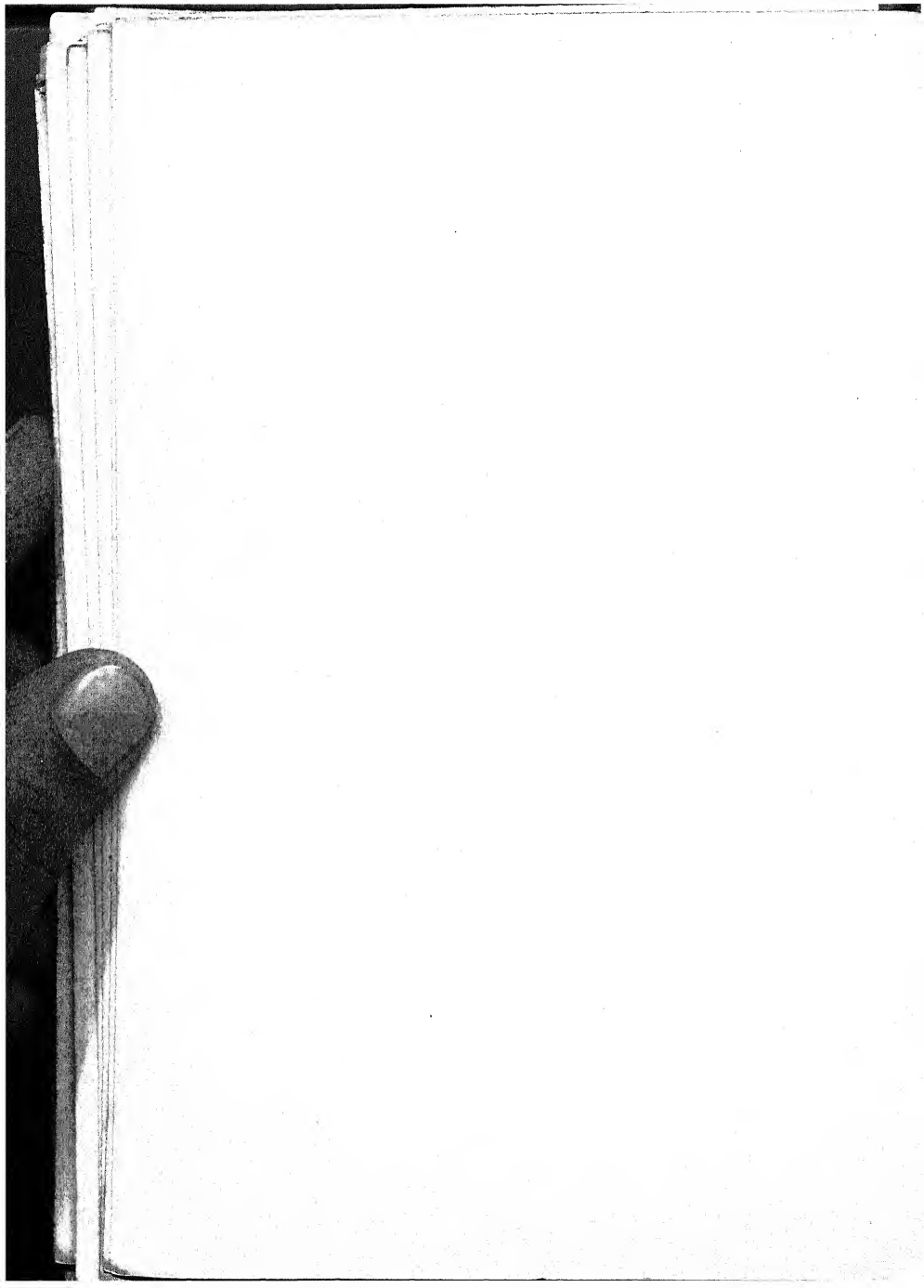
And that was the very happiest Easter that Madden, the Hare, had ever had. One of her greatest enemies was dead; she had three lovely little babies of her very own, and the glad, bright



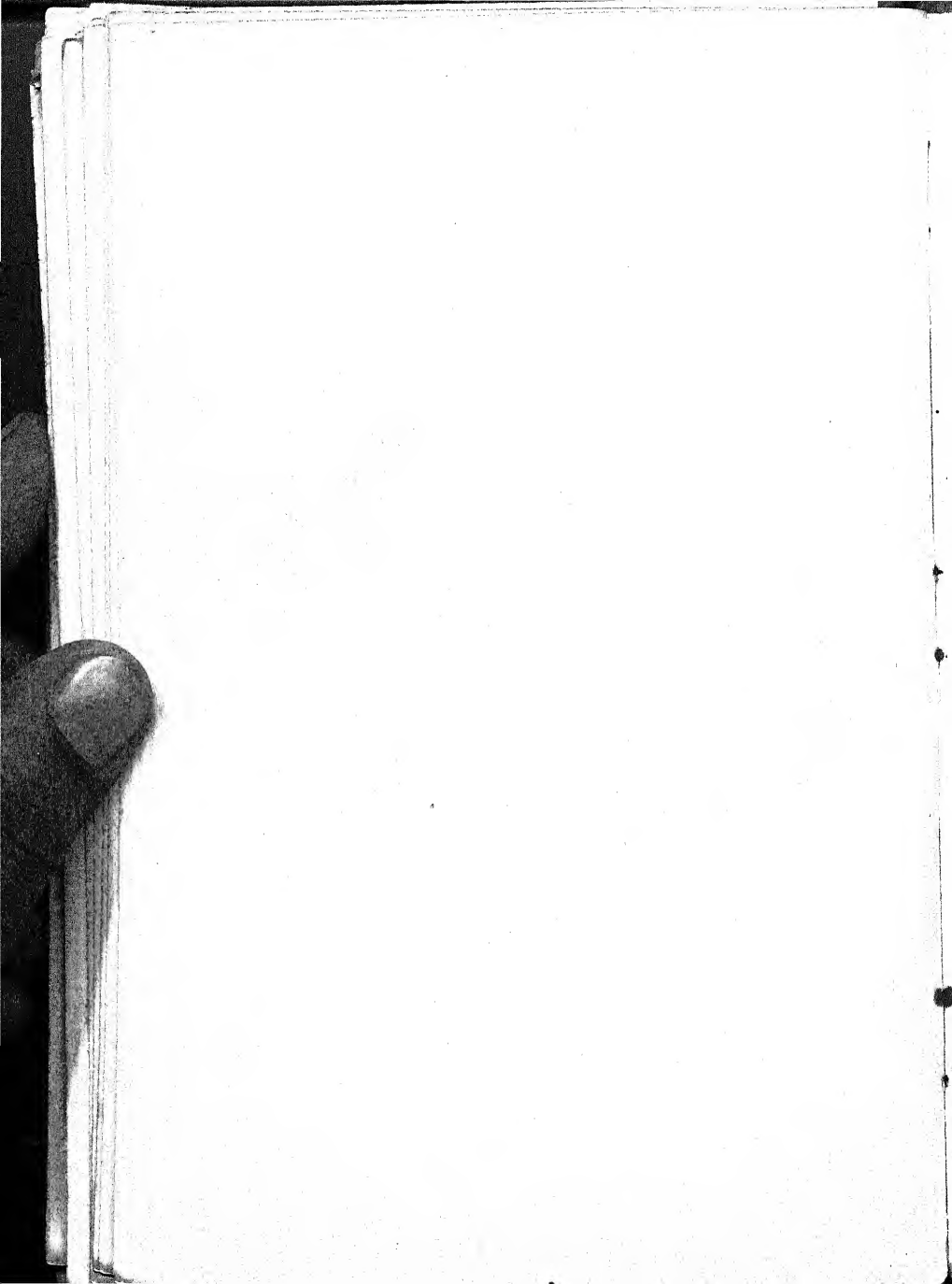
## THE MARCH HARE

sun shone over all the earth, making the little buds open their eyes to see what that bright light was, and making the dull, plain, little brown roots peep up through the earth with little green shoots just to see what everything else in nature was doing.

And, to crown it all, a little bird in a tree near by had just laid her first egg—which was really an Easter egg—and was sitting on a branch singing a most beautiful Easter song, which she had just composed for the occasion.



THE LYRE-BIRD



## THE LYRE-BIRD

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It was May day in one of the most beautiful brushwoods of New South Wales, and Leela, the Lyre-bird, was feeling just as happy as he possibly could, for it was nesting-time, and he and his pretty little wife were as busy as bees.

Leela was very proud of his wife, for he had had many adventures and difficulties when winning her, and so considered he had won a great prize. He was a beautiful bird himself, and although he had had wives before, he had never assumed his full plumage until this year, and so had been unable to sing.\* He had been very

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\*Lyre-birds do not sing until they get their full tails, the two central curved feathers being the last to appear. This takes place about the fourth year.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

proud, indeed, when, a few weeks before, his beautiful central tail-feathers appeared and grew steadily, and when he found he could really sing, he made the most of it and sang morning and evening until his throat ached.

He had tried all sorts of dodges before to make the pretty little bird he liked so much listen to him, but she would not even come near him. In vain he imitated the cries and songs of other birds, so wonderfully at times that the namesakes of the birds he was imitating would actually fly quite close to him, thinking it was one of their own species, and only finding out it was a Lyre-bird when the thick brushwood parted and they were able to see this curious creature, with his enormous brownish body, strong, big, muscular legs, and extraordinary tail, which sometimes spread over his head like a peacock's!

But Leela did not want the birds whose cries he was imitating. He was merely doing it at that time to try to induce the pretty Lyre-bird to come nearer and let him see her. Once he

## THE LYRE-BIRD

nearly managed it, for, quite suddenly, the bushes parted and Preen peeped through.

Leela straightway went up to her, and asked her to have a walk in his private grounds or boundary, but after one or two quick glances, Preen drew back and disappeared, and it was a long time before Leela saw her again. But all this time his tail-feathers were growing steadily, which told all the other Lyre-birds that he was now nearly a full-grown bird, and one day, as he was strutting about he began to sing.

As he sang, he spread his beautiful, graceful tail over his head, drooped his wings, and every now and then in between his songs, would scratch and pick up the earth. And it was while he was doing this that the pretty little Lyre-bird appeared again, and as Leela did not see her and went on singing his hardest, she watched him quietly, thought what a beautiful bird he was, and what a lovely voice he had!

And presently, when Leela looked up and saw her standing there, he felt quite nervous and shy, and for a moment or two did not quite know

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

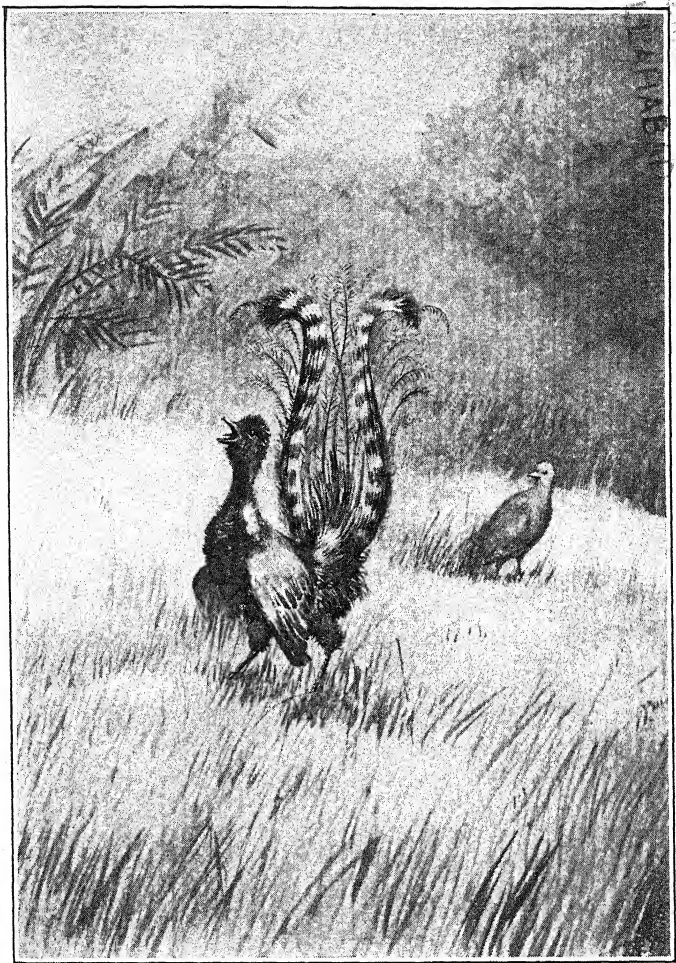
what to say, but then he walked forward to meet her.

And whether it was his singing that attracted her, I don't know, but after that they always went about together, took nice shady walks in the private grounds, which Leela had carefully kept to himself for so long, and finally came to the conclusion that it was quite time to build a nest.

And this was the reason that Leela felt so very happy on that particular May day, and so very important. It was hard work building the nest, for, first of all, the outside had to be made of nice little sticks woven together with moss, and the fine fibres of roots. Then, a number of skeleton leaves of the parasitical tree-fern, which is just like horsehair in appearance, had to be collected to line the inside of the nest and make it firm and soft. After this, the roof had to be put on—for Lyre-birds don't believe in having a nest open at the top—and a hole left at one side to go in and out.

This took some time, and when it was quite





*Wild Creatures Afield*

"SANG AS HE HAD NEVER SUNG BEFORE"



## THE LYRE-BIRD

finished the month of May had gone and June had come, so one fine day Preen went into her nice comfortable nest, and laid one egg. It was a curious-looking egg, of a very dark color, and looked as though it had been smeared all over with ink, but Preen was very proud of it, and so was Leela when he knew of it.

That evening he sang as he had never sung before, not even when he first found he had a voice, and Preen sat in the nest on the egg in order to keep it nice and warm, and listened to her husband's songs. She laid no more eggs, but was very careful over that precious one, and scarcely ever left the nest, except just to eat something and get a little water now and then.

Leela took care she should not have to go far for food. He kept a sharp lookout for insects, and picked out the very best for Preen. He generally brought her beetles, or centipedes, but sometimes he was able to get a nice, fat snail, and this was a great dainty and always did her good.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD.

Once, when Leela had collected one or two beetles and two snails close by the nest, a big snake suddenly shot out from the undergrowth, and had it not been that, with his strong feet and muscular legs, Leela was able to take enormous leaps, he would have been killed on the spot. As it was, he sprang with one bound from the ground to a bough nearly eight feet above, and so saved his life.

For a long time after this Leela was very timid and nervous, and imitated the cries of all the birds who were likely to make snakes keep away, for he was in terrible fear lest one of these dreadful enemies of his should find out the nest, and perhaps eat that most precious egg.

But when June followed May, and July had come, the egg was an egg no longer, for one day the shell cracked, a funny little head peeped forth, followed by a soft, fluffy body, and lo! there was a fine young Lyre-bird!

Very proud his parents were of him, and for a whole month fed and cared for him in the

## THE LYRE-BIRD

tenderest manner, giving him all the dainty bits of food, sheltering him from all danger, and making as much of him as though there never had been such a wonderful young Lyre-bird before.

When he was about a month old, the young bird began to lose his downy, fluffy appearance, and little stubbly growths sprouted from his body, wings, and tail. He was not nearly as good-looking as he had been, owing to his down falling off in patches, and his legs being rather thin and scraggy, but his parents did not mind this a bit. They were only too pleased to see the little stubbly bits peeping out, because it showed it was nearly time to teach him how to walk about and do things for himself.

So one day they made the young bird get out of the nest, and move round first of all on the branches. Then, another day, they taught him how to get down and walk about and find food for himself. Sometimes Leela would hear some bird singing or crying in the distance, and he would imitate it so exactly that the young bird

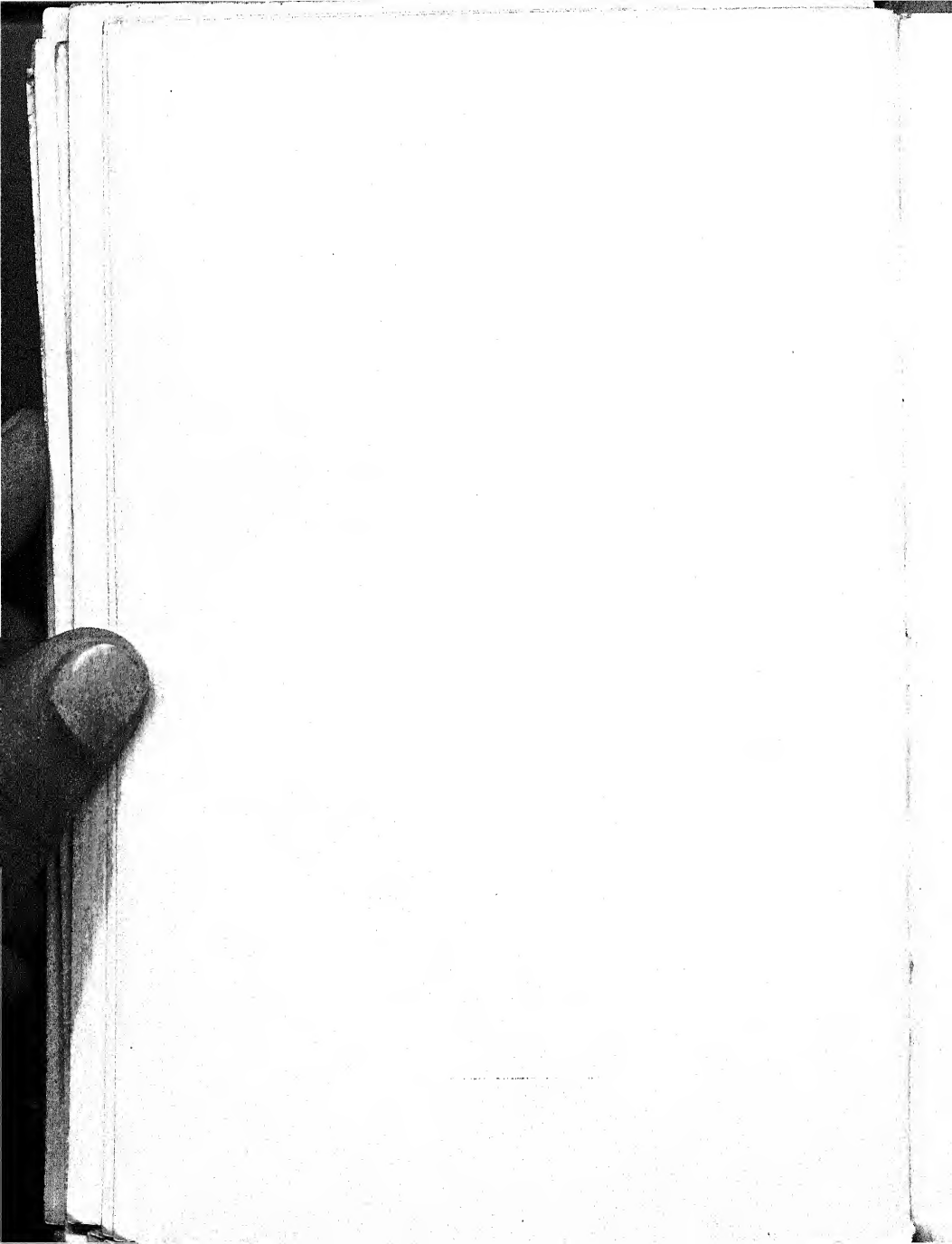
## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

would look round for the stranger, thinking it must be close to him, and the mates of the bird whose cry Leela was imitating, would look in to see what he was doing in the private grounds of a Lyre-bird.

The young bird tried once or twice to do it himself, but he only made a funny little squeak which sounded ridiculous, but when, after a time, his father and mother left him to look after himself, he tried it again, and as he grew older, found he could do it quite easily and very well.

And, in time, he grew to be almost as fine a Lyre-bird as Leela, and, although he had forgotten his father and mother by that time, he did much the same things—ate insects of all kinds, had a private ground of his own, and when his two curved tail-feathers had grown, sang morning and evening as well as ever his father, Leela, had sung on that beautiful May morning a few years before.

THE HAMSTER





## THE HAMSTER

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ONE fine April day, a little, yellowish-brown animal crept out of some soft, dry soil on one of the banks of the Rhine, in Germany, and took a look around.

He was something like a rat, except that he had a short tail, and that instead of being dark above and light beneath, all his upper parts were a lightish brown-yellow, merging into a reddish-brown, while his under parts, the greater part of his legs, and a stripe on his forehead were a deep black, so that he looked as though he had turned his fur coat upside down. The outer part of this coat was hair, but underneath there was a thick coat of woolly fur.

He measured about a foot in length, and was

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

stoutly built, with a thick body and neck, a pointed muzzle, medium-sized, pointed ears, just like a rat's, quick, and very bright eyes, full cheek-pouches, and sharp claws. He looked a queer little object as he stood there glancing hurriedly in all directions, and sniffing the air with his flexible nose in a suspicious manner.

This was Jumperlink, the Hamster, who had only lately awakened from a nice, long, winter sleep, and was so hungry that he even ate a mouse and beetle that happened to be walking that way. This ought to have put him into a good temper, for a mouse is very satisfying, but no one ever saw a Hamster in a good temper yet.

Jumperlink was particularly morose and ill-natured even for a Hamster, and his one thought throughout his life was to get together as much corn in his burrow as he possibly could, and not let any one else have a single grain. His winter burrows were models of neatness and tidiness.

In the first place, he had made a perpendicular entrance into the earth for nearly six feet. At

## THE HAMSTER

the end of this passage he had made a little turn, and then burrowed out his dwelling-chamber. This was not very big, but he rubbed the walls quite smooth with his body, and strewed fine straw on the floor to make it nice and comfortable. Out of this little room he made three other passages—two leading to the granaries, where he stored his corn, and one leading outside.

He had worked day and night all the summer before, hoarding up all kinds of grain, and as soon as one granary was full, stopping up the entrance with earth, and then beginning to fill the other. He was very methodical, too, and kept all the different kinds of grain together, even when they were stored in the same granary. But he never let another Hamster help him, neither did he let him have any of his corn. If his fellows did not gather any for themselves, they could go without for all he cared, even though he had more than he wanted.

But since he had awakened some time before, Jumperlink had eaten all his corn, and this was the reason he had come out of his winter burrow.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

It would soon be time to make his summer burrow now, for no Hamster thinks of living in a winter home in the summer.

The summer burrow is not nearly so far down in the earth, and has not such large storehouses, for there is always plenty of food in the summer—beans, peas, all kinds of fruit, nice fresh grass and green herbage, and fine small insects. And as Jumperlink began to think of all this, he decided that he must look round at once for some suitable spot.

After some little trouble he found a beautiful place, and he was soon very hard at work, for, if a Hamster has one special good quality, it is that he is one of the most industrious little animals to be found anywhere. He never stopped, even to rest, until all the burrows and passages were quite finished and patterns of neatness, tidiness, and cleanliness. Every tiny bit of litter or offensive matter was carried carefully out of doors, and, beyond a little straw and chaff strewn about the entrances, everything was as clean as a new pin.

## THE HAMSTER

But Jumperlink allowed no one to come inside his burrow even to look at it. He had a wife, but he never once allowed her to come and see him. He made her keep to her own burrow, and, if he wanted to see her at any time, he would go to her, but any attempt on her part to go inside his house would lead to a terrific fight, for he hated company and liked always to be alone.

Not only did he make his wife keep to her own burrow, but he also made her find her own food as best she could, for not a grain of corn, or a single bean would he give her. And his wife was just as greedy, and took care to keep all she got for herself. It was because, when Jumperlink came to call on her, that he always tried to get some of her stores, that they generally had a good fight before he went away. She had every bit as much temper and viciousness as Jumperlink, and could fight with her sharp teeth and claws as well as many of the full-grown Hamsters living round, who were noted for their fighting qualities, and avoided by the more timid Hamsters.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

Now, although Jumperlink was so unsociable and so rarely went to see her, he was very jealous of other Hamsters, and would not allow any one else near either his or his wife's burrows but himself. He was always having fights about this matter, for he was dreadfully quarrelsome, and, when in a passion, his strength and ferociousness were surprising. He only wanted a very little excuse at any time for a quarrel or fight, and so, in time, he grew to be avoided by the others as a dangerous fellow, because of his strength and obstinacy.

But there was one other Hamster who was just as surly and quarrelsome as Jumperlink himself, and nearly as strong, and who wasn't the least bit afraid of him. They had had one or two fights, but it had always ended in Jumperlink's getting the best of it. Still, the other fellow was not afraid. He determined to get the best of it one of these days, and so was always ready for another fight whenever there was a chance.

It happened one day that this other Hamster saw Jumperlink come out of his burrow and

## THE HAMSTER

scamper along in the other direction, his little white feet flying behind him, and thinking this would be a good time to steal some of his corn—for he was as greedy and covetous as the rest—he scuttled down Jumperlink's burrow, and into his storehouse without wasting a moment. There were some beautiful things there, all carefully and neatly piled up, and he was just beginning to have a good feed when he heard Jumperlink coming back.

For a moment the Hamster hesitated. It was one thing fighting Jumperlink outside his burrow, but he did not care much about doing it inside. For one reason, he did not know his way about these passages very well, and it was difficult to go out the way he had come in, for a Hamster always has one way to come in and another to go out.

But that moment's hesitation was fatal. Long before the Hamster had time to do anything, Jumperlink was down the entrance, into his dwelling-room, and at his enemy's throat before he knew where he was. The intruder put forth

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

all his strength, shook Jumperlink off with a great effort, and off they started again, biting, uttering little shrill screams, and tearing at one another with their forepaws, forgetting everything but their hatred and anger.

And while they were in the midst of the fight, and panting for breath, there came quietly and softly down the entrance and into the dwelling-place a long, snake-like animal, with a mahogany-brown body, and a small head with keen, bright eyes. This was a Stoat, and one of the Hamster's greatest enemies.\* At any other time the two Hamsters would have known he was near by the disagreeable smell he had when-

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\*The Hamster has numberless enemies. Buzzards, ravens, owls, and other birds destroy them by hundreds, but the polecat and stoat have the greatest power and advantage over them, in being able to follow them into their burrows. Were it not for all these enemies, Hamsters are so prolific that they would speedily overrun the country, and do immense damage to crops, etc. The natives occasionally dig them out and destroy them, and, when doing this, collect all the corn and grain in the burrows.—AUTHOR.



## THE HAMSTER

ever he was angry, but just then they were both so excited that they did not even notice this.

And so, just as the other Hamster was at last getting the best of Jumperlink, the Stoat went quickly forward, seized first one, and then the other, and, before they could either do more than give one little shriek of terror, he had given them each one sharp, deep bite at the back of their necks with his cruel teeth, and killed them almost immediately.

And, had it not been that the Stoat was a little bit lazy that day, he would probably have killed a great many others as well, but he was satisfied with those two and left the others in peace.

So Jumperlink's wife was troubled by him no more, and she was very glad, for soon after this she made a neat chamber and filled it with a bed of soft hay for her six little babies. Such funny little things, quite blind and naked, but with sharp teeth and strong little claws to their feet, which showed they would soon be as great fighters as their father and mother.

But in about seven or eight days their bodies

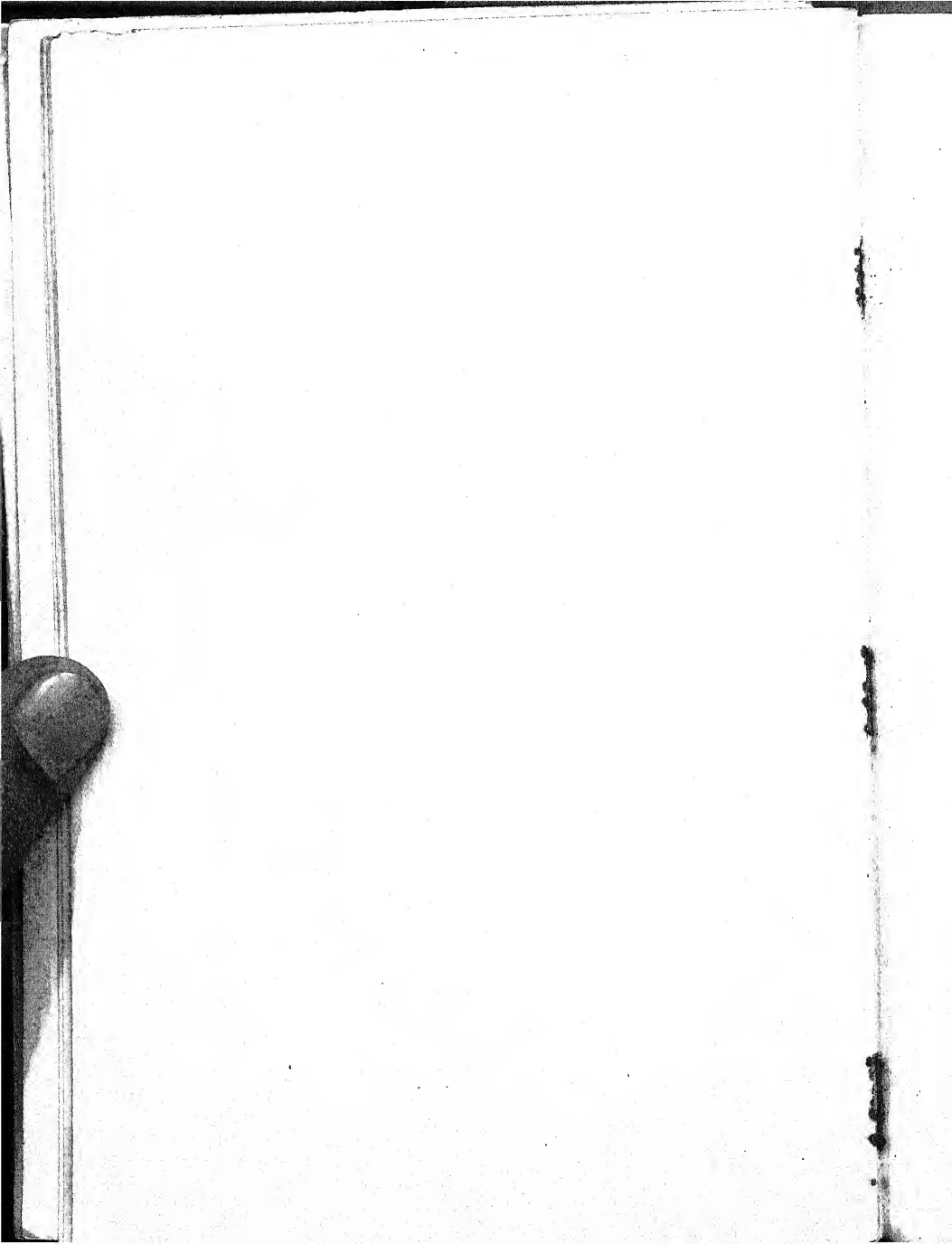
## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

were covered with soft hair, they opened their bright little eyes, and very soon showed that they could be just as cross and disagreeable as any grown-up Hamster. When they were two weeks old they could burrow themselves, and very restless they were, and soon spoiled the tidiness and neatness of the burrow. But when they were nearly three weeks old their mother got very tired of them, although she had been very good to them up to then. She found them very troublesome and tiresome at times, and longed to be alone once more and do as she liked.

So one day when they had all been particularly cross and ill-natured, she turned them all out and let them do the best they could for themselves. And the little Hamsters didn't mind a bit. They hated being in a crowd, and promptly set to work to make burrows of their own, and save up beans and corn for the winter.

But they took very good care after this not to have anything to do with one another, and to keep all they got for themselves, like true Hamsters.

THE COYOTE



## THE COYOTE

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COYT, a handsome full-grown Coyote, or Prairie-wolf, was noted for miles round the neighborhood in which he lived in North America, not only for his unusual size—for, as a rule, a Coyote is not as large as an ordinary wolf—and peculiarly shaped bushy tail, but for his daring and strength, and for the terrible amount of mischief and depredations he had committed from time to time.

It seemed absolutely useless to set traps for him. He passed them by with quick, soft, swift steps, and grinning jaws, as though smiling at the useless efforts of man. All sorts of dodges and contrivances had been tried, various traps of new manufacture, which even the majority of

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

men would not understand without being told, and plans and expeditions which took weeks to work and carry out. Koyt appeared to know all about them, and, although he had some very narrow escapes, he always come out safely, and, with a blood-curdling howl, which sounded like a dozen wolves howling at once, he would be heard in the distance as though jeering and hooting in defiance.

In the winter he had grown desperate at one time, and had even attacked the inmates of a farm-house, and nearly killed a man. In this case the man had in return nearly killed him, but Koyt got off with a hole torn in his hind leg, which made him limp a little all the rest of his life.

He had suffered a good deal while he had this bad leg, and nearly starved to death, but he just saved himself by eating anything that happened to come in his way, which chanced to be one or two mice, a frog, who seemed to have lost his way, and a few insects. By the time he was able to leave the cunningly hidden cave in which he

## THE COYOTE

stayed, he had grown so thin and gaunt that his thick, handsome fur coat hung in limp, ragged folds on his almost fleshless bones, his eyes had almost sunk into his head, and his legs were so weak and rickety that he could scarcely stand.

But he did not give in even then. He dragged himself to the nearest farm that very night and ate a few of the farmer's finest chickens and ducks, one or two eggs, two tame rabbits, and a rat who came out of his hole to see what the hens were cackling about.

And while the farmer was getting dressed to go and see what all the noise was about, Koyt, who felt wonderfully better after his delightful meal, crept off with quick, silent steps, and was a long way off by the time the owner got to the shed. He had a good sleep after this supper—the first good meal he had had for weeks—and in a day or two he was almost himself again, except that he was still very thin.

However, he soon fattened himself up with some more farm delicacies until it seemed too dangerous, and then he hunted up a few rabbits,

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

killed a number of sheep, just for the fun of it, for he could not possibly eat them all, and, when he had driven the poor farmer nearly wild, sneaked off to another neighborhood to play the same tricks over again.

He was playing these tricks when, in spite of all his caution, one night his bushy tail got caught in a trap. In spite of his pain, he did not howl or make the least sound. He knew perfectly well that it would bring his enemies to him at once, and that then there would be no more chance for him.

But when he had tried and tried to pull his tail out of that cruel trap, when he had strained every nerve, drawing his lips tightly back over his fang-like teeth with the acute agony of it, he found his tail was still as tightly wedged in as ever, and that he was simply making matters worse.

With all his efforts and suffering he had only succeeded in tearing his tail badly, and in dragging the trap a tiny distance. He would have taken the trap with him if he could, in spite of the



## THE COYOTE

pain it caused him, but it was far too heavy. So, after awhile, he lay down to rest awhile and to lick his tail as best he could.

After a time, he started up in terror, for he heard a man's voice in the distance. He was willing to fight, for although, like all his kind, he was cowardly, yet, when wounded and brought to bay as in this case, he was brave enough, and could fight to the death.

But, being a Coyote, he had no wish to fight to the death if he could possibly help it. He would very much rather get away; he did not care how, or in what way. So, at the second sound of the man's voice, which was some way off yet, but undoubtedly coming nearer and nearer, he curved his head round towards his tail, and with many whimperings, and little pitiful cries—for it hurt him dreadfully—he deliberately began to bite off the end of his tail.

He had almost finished, and was now trembling from head to foot with pain and fear, when the man's voice suddenly sounded close to him. He gave a sudden start, and with another

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

sharp wrench he was free, and bounded swiftly away, leaving the tip of his beautiful tail in the trap as a souvenir for the farmer.

And then he had another bad time, for his tail was dreadfully painful for a very long while, and he did not dare even to wag it. Once now and then when he felt pleased he would forget it, and wag it, and then he would suddenly stop with a little squeak, and look crestfallen and ashamed of himself, and finally end by lying down and licking it tenderly.

But he got over this, as he got over everything else, and by the time spring had come was well and strong, and as for his tail it only looked as though he had lost a little of the bushy fur at the tip.

By this time he was not only as well and strong as ever, but more reckless and daring than he had ever been in his life before. For, in the nice comfortable burrow which he had helped to make himself, he had a wife and six little baby Coyotes. Pretty little creatures, exactly like young puppies, showing signs of the same gray-

## THE COYOTE

ish, thick fur as his wife and himself. He cared for nothing now that he possessed a wife and family, and determined that they should have the very best of everything, no matter at what trouble or at what cost.

He had brought home various dainties in the shape of chickens, rabbits, a rat or two, and some tender young birds, but it happened one week, that, for some reason or other, a great many men with guns were wandering round all the places where the chickens and rabbits lived, and Koyt decided to try something else for a change.

Not that he was afraid, but he never ran into needless danger; and that there was a great deal of danger about that week he knew perfectly well. So he set off one evening at dusk, and, after running swiftly and silently for a few miles, he came to a thick, bushy place where he knew the Mother Wapiti deer had their little ones.

Now, the mothers had selected this nice, secluded place purposely for the safety of their

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

little fawns. As a rule, pumas and wolves did not come there, it was shady and quiet, and few of the Wapiti's enemies found out their whereabouts. But Koyt always seemed to find out the very things he was not wanted to, and in some curious way he went straight to the hiding-place of one particular Mother Wapiti who had two pretty little fawns.

She was extremely proud of these little ones of hers, because very few Wapitis have more than one baby at a time. She knew instantly of the presence of the enemy, and, terrified as she was at pumas and wolves, she was quite ready to defend her little ones as long as she had breath in her body.

She had been lying down with the fawns when she first became conscious of the danger. Then she suddenly got up, straightened her forelegs firmly, held up her head, and peered about with nervous, frightened eyes. There was a soft rustling movement, but nothing could be seen, although she strained her eyes until they ached. Koyt had tried for Wapitis before now, and

## THE COYOTE

knew that his only chance was to get quite close before he was seen.

But he was not quick enough this time. Just for a second his gray body passed through a thin part of the bushes, and, as the Mother Wapiti caught sight of it, she uttered such a loud, piercing cry that even Koyt, daring as he was, started. It was no wonder he started, for as the mother sent forth that cry, every member of the Wapiti family in the neighborhood hurried out and flew towards her as fast as their fleet footsteps would let them.\*

And then Koyt had a bad time of it. What with being kicked with sharp hoofs, butted and torn with the long antlers of the Wapiti, and nearly stamped on, he began to think his wife would get no more meals at all from him. He would like to have killed just one before getting

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\*In times of danger, the hind gives forth a cry, which at once brings all the members of the herd who happen to be near enough to hear it to her assistance. One and all then unite to drive off the enemy, and do not leave the hind alone again until they have made quite sure that the enemy has gone off to a safe distance.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

away, but there was no chance at all. All the Wapiti, who appeared to come from all parts, were so vicious and determined to drive him off, that, with one long, miserable howl, which echoed and re-echoed through the night air, Koyt made a sudden spring to one side, and then flew across the forest at his swiftest speed.

The Wapiti followed him for some distance, in case he should alter his mind and come back again, but Koyt had no wish to return; he had had enough for one night, and determined now to visit a farm which he knew of, and where he knew he could get a nice young animal of some sort.

Now, as it happened, the owner of this farm had killed a young lamb for himself and family, and had left it hanging up in the shed, but had taken the precaution to carefully lock the door. It was impossible to get in, and as Koyt stood at the door of the shed, tired and breathless, and bleeding in many places, the smell of the fresh meat reached him, and he licked his lips as he

## THE COYOTE

thought of what a beautiful supper that would be if he could only get it.

But he could not get it, so he crept cautiously round the shed, leaving a little trail of blood as he went, for one of the Wapitis' antlers had torn his leg badly. As he went round the shed, the owner came along and unlocked the door; Koyt heard him, but kept perfectly still, waiting to see what would happen next. He crept back a little way, saw the man take down the lamb, bring it out to the door, and then stop and look at the trail of blood leading round to the back of the shed.

These blood-spots evidently puzzled the farmer, for he laid down the lamb just inside the shed, and came out again and followed the trail. As he went round one way, Koyt went round the other, and, as soon as he reached the door of the shed, he sprang in, caught up the lamb in his teeth, and was some distance off before the farmer even noticed his loss.

As soon as the farmer missed the lamb he guessed pretty well that it must have been either

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

a wounded puma or wolf who had left the little trail of blood, but, as he had no gun with him, it was useless going after the thief, although he wondered how a wounded animal could have strength enough to carry off even a little lamb.

But Koyt was wonderfully strong, and as he had got through dangers and difficulties before, so he got through this one, for, in spite of his sufferings, and the long, weary journey home, he arrived there at last, and, faint and exhausted as he was, brought home a good supper to his wife and little ones.

And when he had licked his wounds and rested a little, he joined in with the others, and a very delightful supper they all had.

And Koyt lived on for many, many years after this, until he was an old, gray, shaggy Prairie-wolf, gaunt and lean, fierce and savage, and feared for miles round for his reckless daring and ferocity. His coat got ragged and patchy in time, and he looked very different from the fine, well-grown animal he had been when he was young. But he was always

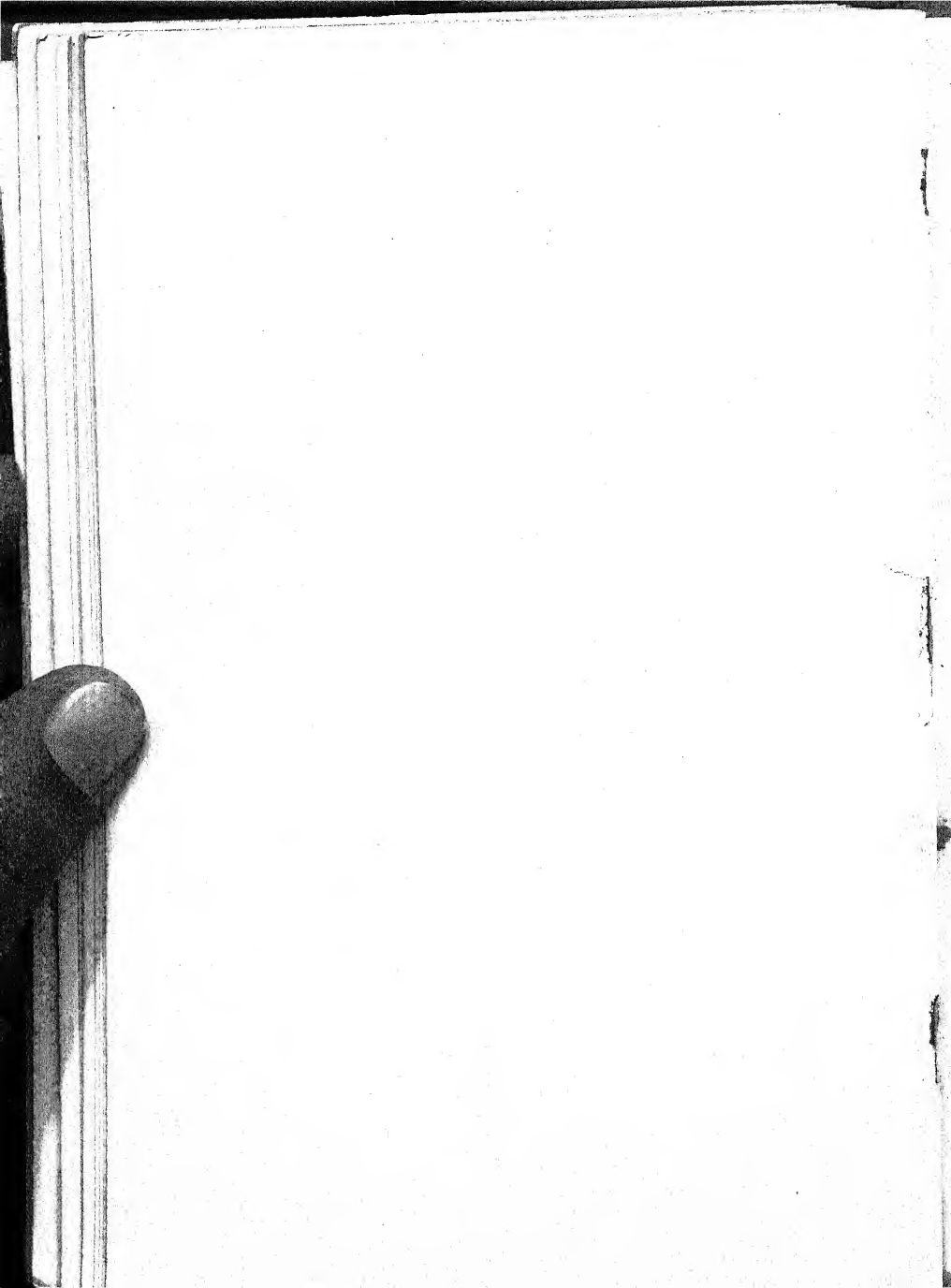


## THE COYOTE

known by a peculiar limp in one leg, and by having no tip to his tail. And all who recognized those signs, took very great care to keep out of his way.



THE SLOTH-BEAR



## THE SLOTH-BEAR

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THE King and Queen of the Termites (White Ants) were resting comfortably in their royal cell, and the busy workers were rushing in and out—some to bring food to the royal occupants, and some to carry away the eggs which the Queen was always so busy laying—when suddenly there was a big earthquake, which not only shook the whole nest, but even the royal cell itself.

Now, as the workers always took care to make the royal cell in the very middle of the nest, for safety, all the Termites knew at once that something dreadful was going to happen. They rushed about wildly here and there, tumbling over one another in their mad haste and crowding up the passages to suffocation. Their one

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

idea was to get out somewhere or anywhere, and they lost no time. But the King and Queen could not get out by themselves.

For one thing, the royal cell had thicker walls than any other part of the nest, and the passages outside were much too small for their big bodies to go through. But in a few minutes they went out by some curious, invisible force; such a powerful, overwhelming force that before they were able even to get frightened they disappeared down a long, dark tunnel and died, while thousands and thousands of the Termites—workers, soldiers, and nasutis—went the same way.

And all this terrible mischief and havoc was caused by Slocum, the Sloth-bear. Slocum did not mind in the least what havoc she caused; she did not even think about it. She had two fine little cubs at home, and had been so busy nursing and attending to them that she had forgotten herself for the time being, and it was only when she grew faint with hunger that she decided to go and get something to eat herself.

## THE SLOTH-BEAR

As a rule, Slocum was rather particular about her food, and much preferred some nice fresh fruit, such as that of the ebony-tree, the jujube plum, figs, or the long beautiful pods of the cassia. She was also extremely fond of the brilliant scarlet flowers of the Mowha-tree, which shed its blossoms every night, also beetles, young bees, and honey. But her favorite food, of which she was passionately fond, was a number of Termites, or White Ants.

But on this hot day she was so desperately hungry that she would not have minded what it was. And yet, as it happened, the very first thing she found was a huge nest of Termites. It was a long way beneath the ground, but she scented it at once,\* and with a little puffing, humming noise set to work with a will.

With her long, sharp claws, five on each foot, she scraped away the earth, under which, with so much care and trouble, the Termites had built

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\*The Sloth-bear's sense of smell is wonderfully acute, and it is able to detect supplies of honey and ants' nests when far below the ground.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

their home. It took a little time, for the nest was a long way down, but at last she came upon the galleries, wonderfully and cleverly constructed, and running in all directions from the royal chamber, which formed the centre of the nest. These she very soon destroyed, while the ants, bewildered and terrified, rushed hither and thither, only to be tossed up and down and in all directions by those powerful claws like the very dust which surrounded them.

But at last she came upon the combs at the bottom of the nest, and, when these were reached, Slocum, who could send out tremendous blasts of air from her mouth, like all her kindred, gave big, violent puffs over and over again, until all the dust and every particle of the crumbled remnants of the beautiful home of the Termites was blown away.

After this, instead of blowing, she sucked in her breath with such tremendous force, that in spite of all efforts—and they made some very frantic ones—every one of the Termites, however carefully enclosed in the combs, was forced



## THE SLOTH-BEAR

out and into the very mouth and throat of the Sloth-bear.

Even the king and queen, who had been trying in vain to get out, not knowing the terrible fate which awaited them, were forced out as well and went just the same way as all the others. And, oh! how Slocum enjoyed them. They were a well-fed, healthy set of ants and just in capital condition, and she was so hungry that she thought she had never tasted anything so delicious in all her life.

As she drew in her breath and the ants at the same time, she gave curious little grunts of satisfaction, and never stopped except to take breath until she had demolished the lot, with the exception of a few stray ants who wandered aimlessly about, not knowing where to go or which way to turn.

So taken up had she been with destroying the ants' nest, and drawing out and eating the ants, that she had not noticed two enemies creeping slowly and cautiously towards her. Slocum had neither good hearing nor good sight, although

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

her sense of smell was so keen, and so, although after a time she suspected something, she did not move, but peered about, screwing her small eyes up like a near-sighted person, in the effort to see what it was.

By this time the enemies—who were two men who just happened to want a Sloth-bear—were quite close to her, and Slocum was in greater danger than she ever realized. But as soon as she saw what it was she wasted no time, but set off. As a rule, her usual way of moving over the ground was by a quick walk, but now she started off into a clumsy, awkward gallop—so ungainly and with such ridiculous antics that the two men could not shoot for laughing.

As she went along she appeared to be tumbling wildly over and over, but nothing stopped her, and she climbed over a huge fallen tree with an agility that surprised the hunters. They had no intention of losing her, so, realizing that unless they were quick she would get ahead of them, the men stopped laughing and tore after her as fast as they possibly could.

## THE SLOTH-BEAR

Fortunately for Slocum, they came just then to a steep side of a hill which dropped suddenly to a valley below, and, hearing the pursuers close behind her, Slocum did a thing which not only surprised her pursuers, but made it quite impossible for them to keep up with her. For, not even stopping to look back, Slocum suddenly let herself go, and away she went down the hill higgledy-piggledy, head over heels, looking like all hair and limbs, and never stopped until she arrived at the bottom, safe and sound, but a little giddy and somewhat bewildered.

She soon recovered herself, however, and, with one look at her enemies, she ambled awkwardly off to her carefully concealed cave not far away, where her precious little cubs were anxiously awaiting their mother's return.

The hunters followed her slowly and looked carefully for her tracks, but when they found it led to a cave they gave it up. It was one thing to face a Sloth-bear in the open, but it was far too dangerous to enter or even go too

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

near the cave. For they concluded from several indications that she had cubs, and a Mother Sloth-bear is a very dangerous animal to face at any time. So the hunters turned back, and Slocum was left in peace with her babies.

And very proud she was of them. They were about as ugly and ungainly-looking little animals as could be seen anywhere, and awkward to a degree, but in their mother's eyes they were wonderful little beings, and she cherished and cared for them, guarded them carefully from danger, and watched their growth with the keen pleasure and delight which only mothers can realize.

Slocum herself was a very ugly, uncouth-looking animal. She measured about five feet in the length of her head and body; she stood about two feet high at the shoulders and weighed nearly two hundred pounds. Her long pear-shaped head, with its peculiar long, mobile snout and upper lip, and tiny eyes; her dirty gray muzzle and rough, shaggy, black fur; and her short hind legs, all seemed to have been a com-

## THE SLOTH-BEAR

bination to make her about as ugly and awkward a looking animal as possible.

The only thing which brightened her were her perfectly white claws. These claws were very long and very sharp, and, when used by her in anger or in defense, proved themselves to be terrible weapons, for they could tear a man to pieces. The two little cubs were more odd-looking than Slocum herself, and performed more ridiculous antics and gambols when being taken out than even their mother did. But they all seemed to think everything was pleasant and just as it should be, and so they had fine times together and were very happy.

Almost the first thing that Slocum taught them to do was to dig out ants' nests, and pick up the blossoms of the beautiful Mowha-tree. But before starting out there were a great many preparations to make and many things to arrange and settle. In the first place, as her babies were so young, Slocum did not expect them to walk, so she lowered herself a little and then the two cubs climbed up on her back—not with-

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

out a good many clumsy tumbles at first—and in this way she carried them carefully to whatever place she wanted to go.

It did not look to an outsider like a particularly comfortable or pleasant ride, for Slocum stumbled and ambled, and shook them up until they seemed likely to topple over every minute. But when they did tumble off, she always waited until they had scrambled up again, and then off they went as before. When they arrived at an ants' nest, the young ones got down and waited while Slocum scraped away the earth, and got nearly down to the galleries. Then they both joined in, and did everything they saw their mother do—blew away the dust, sucked in their breath until they found some nice, fat ants in their mouth, and then swallowed them with delight.

But at the very slightest sign of danger, they would stop suddenly, scramble hurriedly up on their mother's back, and make curious little noises and give funny little puffs to show their anxiety. Then they had to learn how to get

## THE SLOTH-BEAR

honey; how to climb trees in order to get the fruits (and this was the most difficult thing of all, for Sloth-bears are not good climbers); how to catch beetles and larvæ; and, sad to relate, how to rob birds' nests of their eggs.

All these things they learned, and Slocum took great care of them until they were several months old, and about the size of ordinary sheep dogs. By this time there was not room for both of them on their mother's back, and they were certainly quite big and strong enough to walk, but, as they seemed to enjoy these rides quite as much as when they were tiny, one would ride on the mother's back and the other walk by the side.

And there were some pretty severe quarrels and fights about this matter occasionally. Both wanted to get up, and as it was the one who got there first who had the ride, the scrambling got pretty rough sometimes, and Slocum often came in for some very severe scratches and clawings, which she as often returned with such severity that the scramble would end, once now and again, in a general quarrel all round. But they

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

understood each other very well, their quarrels were soon over, and they were as happy as ever.

One day, however, a terrible thing happened. They were all walking through the forest on their way to a beautiful sugar-cane field—for Sloth-bears are particularly fond of sugar-canes—when Slocum noticed a number of little vessels hanging on the branches of some palm-trees. With great difficulty she climbed up to see what they were and found they were half full of the most delicious juice.\*

It was so delicious, in fact, that Slocum even forgot to tell her babies to come up, and sucked and sucked until she felt so queer and giddy that she could hardly get down the tree again. When she did get down, all she could do was just to lie down where she was and go sound asleep. In vain the little cubs did their best to awaken

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\*The Sloth-bear will often go to these vessels, which are hung on the palm trees to catch the juice, of which they are so fond that they are said not to leave off until they are very intoxicated. The palm-civets and the fox-bats also do the same thing.—AUTHOR.



## THE SLOTH-BEAR

her by patting her—making queer little noises, and crying for food.

Not a sound or even a movement could they get out of their mother, and, there being nothing else to do, they finally settled themselves down by her, sucked their paws comfortably, and made that curious little drumming noise that all bears make when doing this. But they got very tired at last and very hungry, and, not being able to understand their mother's long silence, they at last left her and wandered back to the cave again.

And when Slocum woke up some hours afterwards and found that her cubs had left her, she gave such a weird, unearthly scream, so startling and terrifying, that the very woods resounded again. Without a moment's hesitation she ambled off towards the cave in great distress, moaning and grumbling and whimpering to herself, and so worried that she could scarcely see where she was going; she was such a loving, devoted mother, and so proud of her little ones.

But when she drew near her old home, her dis-

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

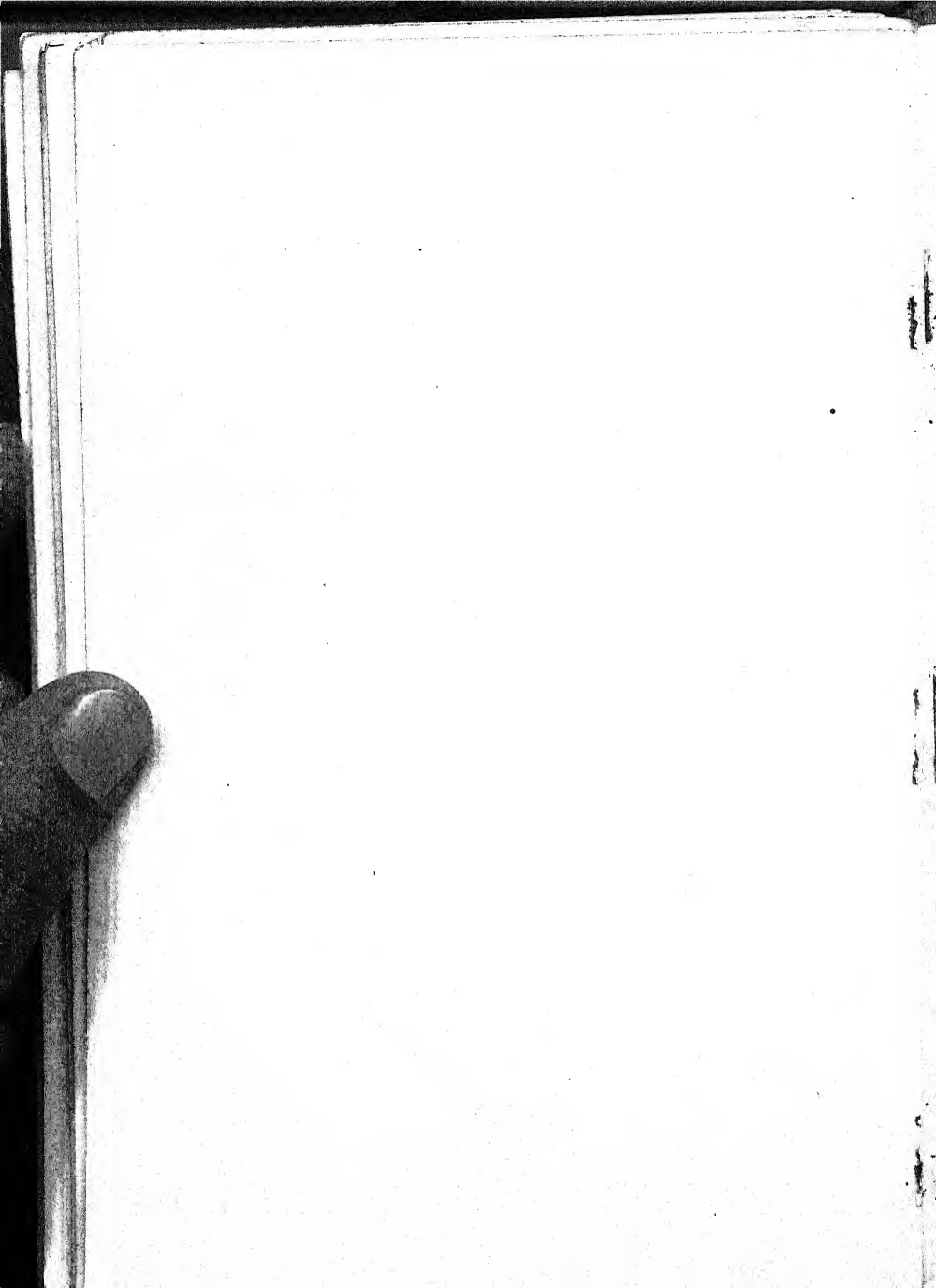
tress was so great that she could not help making another of those terrifying noises, and this noise the little cubs heard dimly at first, for they were both fast asleep, but when, seeing no sign of them, she gave another one, more shrill and weird than before, the little cubs woke up with a start, winked their eyes once or twice, listened a minute, and then tore out to meet her, wild with joy.

And what a meeting that was! Slocum had never been so pleased before to see them, and never caressed them so tenderly. For some little time she forgot everything but that she had found her little ones again, and that they were well and unhurt. And the little cubs were doubly pleased to find their mother, for they had been so frightened in that cave all by themselves, and were desperately hungry.

So, when they had relieved their feelings a little, their mother gave them as much supper as they wanted, and they were all very happy once more. But after this—whether Slocum was afraid of losing her children again, or whether

## THE SLOTH-BEAR

she felt a little ashamed of the effects of that juice, I don't know—but whenever she saw any little cups or basins hanging on palm-trees she always turned away, and took her little ones in another direction. And the little Sloth-bears, knowing nothing about it, followed her obediently, as they always did.



THE TASMANIAN DEVIL



## THE TASMANIAN DEVIL

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**H**E had an ugly name and an ugly nature, and lived up to both to such a degree that every living thing—both small and big—went in constant fear and dread of him.

This was Tartar, the Tasmanian Devil, and he was as ugly and repulsive in appearance as in everything else. His body was about the size of an ordinary badger's, but it was so powerfully and sturdily built, and he possessed so much muscular strength, that it was not much wonder he was so terribly feared and hated.

His large, wide head, covered with thick, close fur, surmounted with large rounded ears; his wicked, vicious eyes; his short, broad muzzle,

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

and his mouth, full of closely packed powerful teeth, with the flexible upper lip always drawn up in a threatening snarl, were enough to frighten any one at the first glance, but it was only those who knew him who actually realized what a terrible creature he was.

His body was covered with the same sort of close, straight fur as his head, except that there was a thick growth of under fur which gave him a thick, stodgy appearance. His flat, furry feet—very like a bear's—were furnished with tremendously strong claws, particularly the forefeet, and these made nearly as much havoc sometimes as his teeth. The only relief to the blackish-brown color of his whole body was a white patch on his throat, and, in some curious way, this white patch always seemed to make the rest of him look blacker than ever.

On this particular day, Tartar was in one of his most vicious and ill-natured moods, and was just ready for any mischief that came to hand. He had been sound asleep in his burrow all day,



## THE TASMANIAN DEVIL

for he hated light of any sort, and a glimpse of the sun nearly blinded him.\*

Now, for some reason or other, food had not been quite as plentiful as usual lately, and although Tartar was not at all particular as to what he ate, so that it was a living creature of some kind, there were certain foods that he preferred to others. One of his favorite dainties was a nice young lamb, and as there were plenty of farms round about he had never had any difficulty in getting what he wanted.

But the farm that he lived on—which was the largest and best for miles round—had changed owners lately, and a strange man had taken up his quarters there—a man who was so restless and sharp-eyed that he was always looking round the farm just when he was not wanted, and, what was worse still, carried a long, thick

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\*This objection to light on the part of the Tasmanian Devil is often the means of his capture or death. If once he can be induced to leave his burrow and come out into the sunlight, he is practically helpless, the sun having such a blinding effect that he is unable to see where he is going.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

stick that spat fire and smoke whenever he chose to make it. And Tartar did not like fire and smoke, and so had taken care to keep out of his way.

But it was not that which made him feel vicious just then. It was that he had found out that this stupid man had put all his sheep, lambs, and any nice, tender animals which make a good supper, into strong sheds and stables, and so carefully fastened them up that it was impossible to get hold of a single one. In vain Tartar used his powerful teeth on the fastenings and locks. They were all made of some hard, cold stuff on which he could make no impression whatever, and when he bit very hard, they even made his teeth ache.

Once he had found a nice wooden place which he could very soon have gnawed through, but just as he was doing it, up came the sharp-eyed farmer, and Tartar, with a vicious snarl, decided it would be wiser for him to go back into his burrow for a time.

But to-night he had a new idea. He would

## THE TASMANIAN DEVIL

try no more fastenings and cold, hard locks; he would make a burrow underneath the ground, and so get into the sheds that way. He wasted no time, for he always had a huge appetite, and was desperately hungry; so, with his sharp, strong claws he set to work, and after some time and much labor found himself actually inside a shed full of beautiful fat sheep and lambs.

The poor animals were terrified; they knew only too well what it meant, and while the poor mothers bleated and "baa'd" in their deep voices, the little lambs "baa'd" back again in their gentle tones, crept close to their mothers, and quivered with fright. But they did not "baa" long, poor things, for Tartar soon put an end to their lives by a few sharp bites from his cruel teeth.

He could not possibly eat even one lamb for his supper, but he always killed as large a number as he possibly could, for he loved killing, and this was one of the reasons he was so hated and dreaded by the farmers. To destroy life was one of his greatest pleasures, and when he

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

had thoroughly enjoyed himself in this way and had killed nearly all the animals in the shed, he settled himself down and had a good supper.

He had rather an odd way of eating. Tearing a piece of meat off one of the animals he had killed, he would sit bolt upright, just like a bear or a squirrel, and, holding the piece of meat in his forepaws, eat it at his leisure, smacking his lips and growling to himself as though in memory of the time he had had in killing the poor animals.

And while he was taking it easily in this manner and enjoying himself, the farmer was walking about outside, keeping a sharp lookout, and holding his gun in readiness, for he knew there were one or two Devils about, and meant to waste no time and take no rest until he had killed them. He little dreamt that at that very moment one was actually eating one of his lambs, and had destroyed more than he could afford to buy again for many years to come!

## THE TASMANIAN DEVIL

But early the next morning a terrible sight met his eyes. All the fine prize animals which had cost him a small fortune, and which he had spent so many sleepless nights in guarding so carefully, were dead, and he knew only too well by the signs that it was the work of those Tasmanian Devils.

At the sight of it, and the thought of all it meant to his wife and family, the poor farmer sank down in the shed and groaned, and had it not been that he was a grown-up man, one would have imagined that his eyes were full of tears, and that he was shaking with sobs. But this was only for a minute. He soon began to look round, and at once made up his mind that he would catch those vicious little animals in some way or another.

So he wasted no time fretting, but set to work with a will, cleared away all the poor, mangled bodies, and by the same evening there was a nice clean shed once more, only this time, instead of a large number of sheep and lambs, there was only one little lamb and he was so frightened

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

and miserable that it was quite pitiful to see him. But his master was not being so cruel as he seemed.

He did not intend any harm to come to the little lamb if he could possibly help it, but he wanted the Tasmanian Devil to pay another visit to the shed that night, and he knew he would not come unless there was at least one living creature for him to kill. So, when he had tied the little lamb up, he gave its small woolly head a gentle pat as if to reassure it, and then fixed a peculiar-looking thing just at the mouth of the burrow through which Tartar had crept the night before.

He covered over this peculiar thing with straw and hay, and then sat down, gun in hand, to wait. Hour after hour went by. The moon crept out, peeped in through the crevices of the shed and made it just light enough for the farmer to look round. But suddenly, after a long, weary wait, there was a rustle, a pause, and then a scamper, followed by a snapping noise, a loud bang, two terrible screams, and

## THE TASMANIAN DEVIL

then a silence broken only by the painful bleating of the little lamb.

Then the farmer struck a match and lighted his lantern, which he had brought with him. And as he raised it, he saw a far more peculiar sight than he had seen the night before. On the floor of the shed were two Tasmanian Devils—one limp and dead, and the other struggling frantically to free one leg which had got caught in a steel trap.

The struggling one was Tartar, and the dead one was his wife, whom he had invited to come and help him kill sheep and lambs. At the sight of the bright light, Tartar shut his eyes tightly and shrieked again and again, struggling with his whole strength to get free and biting so viciously at the trap that it was a wonder he did not break his teeth. But it was all no use. The trap was made of the same cold, hard stuff as the bolts and bars, and his teeth made no impression beyond a few scratches.

And then the farmer had his revenge. He lifted his arm and shot Tartar dead, and had

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

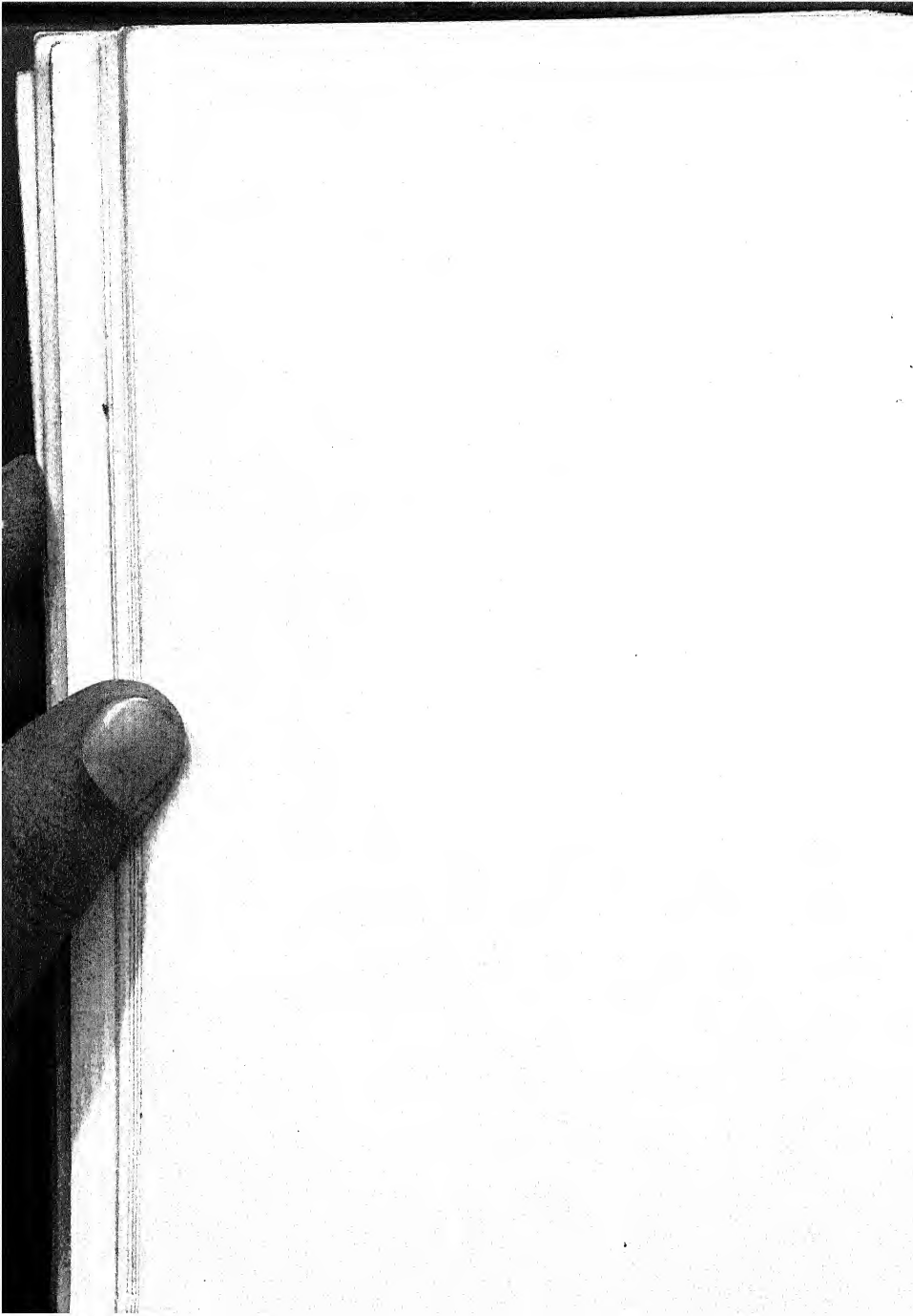
the satisfaction of knowing he had killed a pair of Tasmanian Devils, who probably had a large family concealed somewhere, but who would now die for want of food. This meant that there would be about ten or twelve less Tasmanian Devils round about the farm, which would make all the difference to the poor animals.

So, although he had lost so many sheep and lambs, the farmer concluded that perhaps it was all for the best, and for the future he was even more careful than before. And whether the other Tasmanian Devils heard of this I don't know, but he saw no more of them for many a day, but was able to rear his sheep and other animals in safety.

And the poor little lamb who had had such a terrible time went back to his mother, and grew to be a full-grown sheep himself in time, but in some curious way he was terribly afraid of Tasmanian Devils as long as he lived.




THE DUCKBILL



## THE DUCKBILL

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 **I**T was in vain that Dumpy, the Duckbill, hunted and hunted for the opening of her burrow in the thick herbage and grasses just above the deep, still pool where she made her home.

It was only a short time before that she had come out of that particular opening, and now, instead of the usual space in among the grasses, which led to her burrow and home, there was a hard bank of earth which resisted even her strong feet and sharp claws.

Dumpy was a queer-looking little object as she waddled clumsily to and fro. She had a flat, oval body, something like an animal's, covered with short, close fur, very like that of a mole; this fur was a deep,

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

dark brown on top, and a pale brown underneath. She had very short dumpy legs, terminating in curious webbed feet with five toes on each. These toes were furnished at the tips with very long, strong nails, for, in addition to being a good swimmer, the Duck-bill is also able to burrow.

Perhaps the most curious part about Dumpy was her head. It was flat, with tiny eyes, no ears to be seen, and a bill which was very much like a duck's. In fact, just at first, one would wonder what she really was.

She rustled about in a great state for some time, for she had two newly laid eggs in her home below, and longed to get at them. What if something had happened to them, or some one had taken them! She scrambled about in her awkward manner until she was almost too exhausted to move.

Then she suddenly remembered the opening under water, and in another moment was in the water and diving down as fast as she could go. She had no difficulty this time in find-

## THE DUCKBILL

ing the entrance, and, once in, she ran at her fastest speed to get to the nice comfortable place she had made for her eggs.

Dumpy had a long way to go, for the burrow was nearly thirty feet long, but she scrambled on, never once stopping until at last she entered the little cave she had so carefully and with so much labor hollowed out, and could be sure that her beautiful eggs were quite safe.

But there they were, just as she had left them. Two small, white eggs in strong, flexible shells lying side by side on some dry grasses and leaves. So delighted was Dumpy to see them again and to know they were safe that she at once went and curled herself up on them, covering them with her warm, soft, furry body in very much the same manner in which a bird sits on the nest.

Now, as a rule, Dumpy was never so happy as when sitting on her eggs, but this evening she felt uneasy and worried, for the curious way in which the land end of her burrow was covered up meant mischief.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

If it did not mean mischief from an enemy, it meant something far more serious still, and that was, that, unless she was able to open it again, her little ones would not be able to go out that way. Little Duckbills are always afraid of the water just at first, and the mother generally lets them take a little walk on land to begin with.

But, worried as she was, Dumpy got very sleepy after a time, and went sound asleep and did not wake up until the next morning. And when she did wake up, she saw to her surprise that the soft egg-shells had burst open, and two funny little creatures, blind and naked, with soft, short bills which opened incessantly in a circle, and with curious little webbed feet, were under her, nestling into her warm, soft body, and evidently very hungry.

Dumpy was so pleased and proud that she settled herself down again, and even forgot to get herself food. At last, feeling tired and hungry, she wandered up to the land opening of her burrow to get something to eat.

## THE DUCKBILL

She usually went to the water first, but for some reason this particular morning she went upwards. It was not until she got to the end of the tunnel that she came to the obstacle again, and then she made a determined effort to break through it. But, strong as Dumpy was, and good as she was at burrowing, she could make no impression whatever on this hard substance, and so was obliged at last to turn back again.

This time she passed straight through her comfortable little house without stopping, and went on to the water entrance. Once there, away she went into the water and down to the mud-banks, where she dipped her wide, strong bill deep down into the soft mud and brought up any snails, worms, or slugs she could find. These she stored carefully into her cheek-pouches, one of which she had in each cheek, and when she had collected enough for a good breakfast, she once more made her way back to her home, and there ate it at her leisure.

But she was still uneasy about her land en-

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

trance, and that evening when it grew dusk she kept a careful watch. Every now and then she would pop up to the top of the water, and when she did this she looked exactly like an old black bottle floating on the surface, for her short legs were tucked under her, and her wide, flat tail hung straight out behind her.

And this is why her enemies, who were also keeping a careful lookout, did not notice her at all. But Dumpy saw them quickly enough. She also saw what they were doing. A man and some boys were trying to burrow down into the earth with long sticks just to find out whereabouts the Duckbill's nest really was. But they did not find it, and, after seeing them move off, Dumpy went home again to give her babies their supper, and then she wandered off once more.

This time she neither went to the land entrance nor the water entrance, but, when in the middle of her tunnel, began to burrow in an oblique direction, and before very long had another tunnel almost as long as her first one.



## THE DUCKBILL

It was some time, however, before she finished it, and by then the little ones had grown stronger, had eaten up the remains of the eggs from which they had been hatched themselves,\* and were quite ready for any fresh snails, slugs, or worms they could get.

So, one day, when Dumpy had given them a good feed, she took them out of the old home, which had been prepared so carefully for them, to a new burrow, the land end of which came out in quite a different direction from the old one, and was more cunningly hidden in the thick grasses and herbage.

And when she had settled them comfortably in their new quarters, she went back to the end of the tunnel which led into their old home, and closed and sealed it carefully. She had made a water entrance to their new home, and did not want two; moreover, she evidently remembered her enemies.

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\*The eggs of the Duckbill are very large yolks, a large portion of which is left when the young are hatched, and is used by them as food.—AUTHOR.

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

And that very same day—about two weeks from the time Dumpy had first found out the danger—the man and boys came again to the land opening of the old home, and did what Dumpy had tried in vain to do, dig away the stuff which closed it. It did not take them long, for they had sharp pickaxes and spades, and very soon had it open again.

And when they had opened it they went on digging for a long, long time until they all had to stop and wipe their faces, because they were so hot and tired. But at last they had dug almost down to the very place where Dumpy had laid her eggs.

“Now we are near it,” the man said pleasantly; “we have come to the open space. This shows we are almost on the nest of the Duck-bill, but they are very shy creatures, so we must be very quiet and careful.”

They were very careful, but when they had dug a little bit farther, and came upon the open space, there were only some dry leaves and grasses, the remains of soft egg-shells, and some

## THE DUCKBILL

loose earth, which appeared to have been thrown over it all.

The man looked very disappointed, and the boys looked at him inquiringly.

"Well!" the man said with a sigh, as he wiped his streaming face once more, "I'm afraid we've left it until too late, boys. The Mother Duckbill has deserted this burrow and gone to a new one. I have no doubt she is ever so far off by this time, and out of our reach. Another time we won't wait so long. I didn't think she would hatch for another week."

But the Mother Duckbill was not so very far off, as you know, and, had they only known it, was watching them all the time. She was a little afraid at first that they would find the entrance to her new home, but when she saw them all walk off, she scuttled down into her burrow again in her clumsy way, delighted to get back to her babies once more.

And that evening there appeared at the top of the water what looked like one big black bottle and two little ones, but, in reality, these were

## WILD CREATURES AFIELD

Dumpy and her two children. And what fine times they had! Dumpy taught them how to swim, how to float, and how to dive deep, deep down into the water at the very slightest sign of danger.

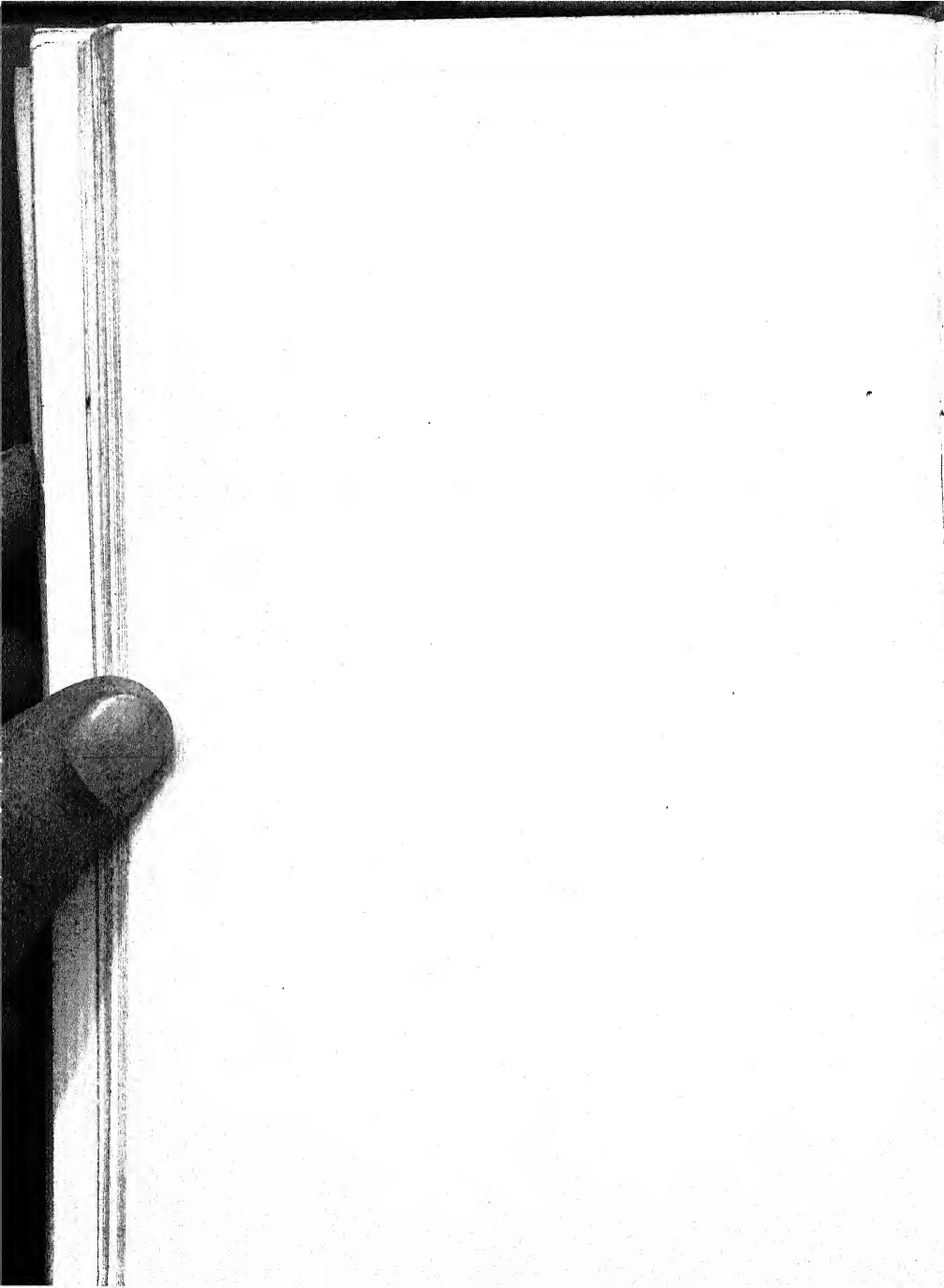
And as the time went on and the two little Duckbills grew big and strong, they found other Duckbills in Tasmania and were so friendly that they generally all kept together,\* and were very happy.

So, you see, Dumpy was very clever, although she was only a Duckbill. But then she was a mother, and mothers are always clever when they have little ones to take care of.

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\*Although gregarious in the water, Duckbills keep very much to themselves in their burrows.—AUTHOR.

THE LAUGHING JACKASS



## THE LAUGHING JACKASS

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PEALS of laughter rang out in the clear, warm air—so joyous, so cheery, and infectious that it was almost impossible to help joining in.

After several of these peals, there would be a little pause, and then the laughter would begin again; softly at first, with a curious little chuckle, and then increase until the neighboring echoes took it up and laughed again and again.

The Australian Bushmen, who heard it, nodded their heads wisely and looked pleased, because they looked upon it as a sign of fine weather; the small birds listened with their heads on one side, and their tails whisking up and down; the small rodents, such as rats, mice,

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etc., scampered away hurriedly, while the lizards, snakes, and insects drew back cautiously out of sight.

And all this noise and commotion was made by Giglums, the Laughing Jackass, who had been given this name by the Bushmen from his habit of laughing at all times and in all places, without any particular reason except that the sun was shining. He was sitting on the branch of a tree which overhung the water, and although he appeared to be thinking of nothing but laughing and chuckling, he was keeping a sharp lookout, for at the bottom of the tree on which he was resting, in a nice hollow, his wife had two beautiful pearl-white eggs, and if Giglums saw any creature go near the tree, he fluttered his wings, stopped his laughter and flew down in fierce anger.

Like all the Kingfishers, Giglums was a large eater, and after awhile he got tired of laughing and very, very hungry, so he kept perfectly still and watched the water below him anxiously. But it was not a good day for fishing; the sky



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was too blue and the sun too bright, and it was a whole hour before Giglums saw a single fish.

Then, one unsuspecting, silvery little creature popped his head out of the water after a fly, and instantly Giglums was after him. But for some reason or other he missed his aim, and found himself in the water without getting anything for his trouble. But a Kingfisher minds the water no more than a duck, for, having small, close-fitting feathers, the water runs off, leaving him as dry as before.

After shaking himself a little and pluming his feathers, Giglums, who by this time was simply ravenous, decided he would not do any more fishing that day, and set to work to find some other food which would be easier and quicker to catch. He began to look about, and as he was now ready to eat anything and everything which came in his way, picked up an insect or two as a beginning. After this he found a fishbone, and this he took up in his beak, and into the hollow of the tree,

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where he placed it carefully with the pearl-white eggs.\*

There was no sign of a nest, but there were other fishbones there thrown round and about the eggs, and the rotten wood of the tree made a soft resting-place for them. Giglums' wife looked at the fishbone with approval, but was evidently disappointed to find it was not something nice to eat.

Giglums was a very good husband, and he set off at once. As he had kept quiet now for some time, the creatures who had all been so frightened at the noise he made had come out again, and in a very short time he took a meal to his wife, as varied and dainty as any Kingfisher could wish.

He found a nice, fat crab to begin with, then a mouse, a few insects, and lastly a delicious young lizard. Giglums could hardly make up his mind to take in that lizard to his wife, for it

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\*We are told by some authorities that these fishbones are placed round and about the eggs by the birds, with the idea of forming a nest.—AUTHOR.

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was one of his favorite foods, and he was desperately hungry by this time. But he took it in finally, and very pleased his wife was.

But he couldn't stay and watch her eat it; that was too much. So he hurried out once more and was fortunate enough to find another lizard, young and even larger than the one he had given his wife, and he was so delighted with it that he carried it off to a nice shady place where he was not likely to be disturbed, and enjoyed it at his leisure. He had a few other things before he had finished, a rat, which was so big he could scarcely swallow it, a young snake, and a few berries.

He would rest a little in between, and seemed so bright, brisk, and happy that it was a pleasure to look at him. He was an odd-looking bird, in spite of his bright, happy air. He had a brownish body, measuring about sixteen inches, the lower part of his back being a greenish blue; a large head with a crest of brown feathers tipped with white; broad white eyebrows, which joined the white feathers round his

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neck; a whitish breast; and a tail about six inches long with striped feathers. His beak was thick and very strong, beautifully adapted for catching small reptiles, animals, and fish.

When he had eaten as much, and rather more, than he wanted, Giglums settled himself comfortably and had a good sleep. It was a very hot day, he had worked very hard at providing food for himself and wife, and, having had a good meal, there was not much to trouble about. As he slept and his big head drooped a little, the sun covered him with a golden cloak, making his brown, dull feathers look bright and shiny, and the green ones on his back glisten and shimmer in all the colors of the rainbow.

And when he woke up after a long sleep, he plumed his feathers, and had another fit of laughter, scaring the birds, making all the small creatures scamper away in fear, and sending weird echoes through the surrounding woods. It was a glorious and joyous day, and why shouldn't he laugh?

But the next morning Giglums was a very

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different-looking creature. He had lost all semblance of his former bright self. His feathers were ruffled, his wings drooped and drooped until they could droop no further, and he sat and moped until he looked the very picture of misery and wretchedness.

He seemed too sick and miserable to even hold up his head, and had an untidy, bedraggled appearance, just like an old hen who has been caught in a shower. No one would have dreamed that he was the very same Kingfisher who, only the day before, had been so brisk, and bright, and happy, filling the air with his peals of laughter.

And all this was because it was a dull morning, a few heavy, dark clouds were in the sky, and there was no sun to be seen. Giglums hated dull weather, and knew perfectly well by the feel of it that rain was coming, and a more miserable-looking object than a Laughing Jackass in wet weather, it would be almost impossible to find.

He sat on the bough of the tree which was his

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home, with his body humped up, and all his feathers drooping until a few rain-drops fell, and then, looking utterly crushed, Giglums decided to go inside and keep his wife company. He was just as miserable in the dry root of the tree, but he was at least out of the wet, and there he stayed for hours, a poor, feeble-looking, dilapidated bird, opening his mouth once now and then in a weak manner as though almost at his last gasp.

And then, in the middle of the afternoon, he suddenly heard something which made him forget the dull weather and the rain, made him gather himself together with a start and caused him to think of nothing but his wife and their two precious eggs. And this something was a curious hissing, so soft and gentle that it could almost have passed for the sighing of the trees.

But Giglums knew perfectly well what it was, and looked out of the tree cautiously. Prepared as he was, he could not help starting, for there, just in front of the hollow in the tree, was a snake. His long, lithe body was coiled round

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and round, but his head was uplifted and waving gently to and fro, while the soft, gentle hissing never stopped for a moment.

Giglums knew perfectly well what he was after. All snakes are fond of birds' eggs, and Giglums grew sick with terror. But there was no time to be lost, not even a moment, so, with a lightning-like dart, Giglums flew out and over the head of the snake, only just missing the dart of his tongue by an inch.

Then, poising himself for a moment in the air, he suddenly darted down again, seized the snake by the back of its head with his big, strong beak, and, flying high up in the air, let it drop to the ground. Then, down he went again, seized it by the neck as before, and did the same thing again and again until it was dead.

So overjoyed was Giglums at this that, leaving the snake on the ground, he flew up into the tree and laughed and laughed until he could laugh no longer. And then he suddenly found that the rain had stopped and the sun had come out again, and up went his head and wings, his

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ruffled feathers settled themselves tidily once more, and he giggled and chuckled and laughed until he looked just like the silly old Laughing Jackass that he was.

But he had saved the eggs, and very pleased his wife was about it, for she certainly wouldn't have bothered to lay any more that year. And when Giglums stopped laughing he brought in the dead snake and they ate it between them, and both seemed to think that it was the sweetest and most tender snake they had ever eaten.

And soon after this there came a happy, happy day for both. For, one fine morning first one egg cracked and then the other, and out wriggled two weak, helpless, naked little bodies, so thin and scraggy and with such huge heads and mouths that no one but a father or mother could have thought them anything but hideously ugly.

But, in the eyes of Giglums and his wife, they were the most beautiful little Laughing Jackasses that had ever been born, and nothing was too good for them. Giglums worked day and

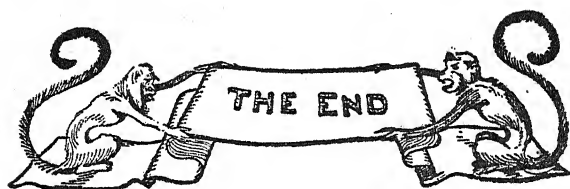


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night to find delicate, nourishing food for them, and grew thin from watching for enemies, and guarding them from danger. Sometimes he would bring home a pretty little silvery fish; sometimes a frog, lizard, or some small insects; at another time he would make tunnels into the ant-hills of red clay which are so plentiful in Australia, and bring some little ants by way of a change.

In a very little while the young birds were covered with feathers. But as, at first, these were enclosed in little sheaths, they looked like funny, bristly little objects until, these feathers being fully grown, the sheaths suddenly fell off, leaving them fully plumed.

And the day that this happened, whether it was that Giglums was so pleased and proud of his children, or whether it was because the sun was shining so brightly and gayly, but he sat and laughed until he nearly choked himself. And after that, can you wonder that this Kingfisher is always called the Laughing Jackass?



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